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JUN 05 2008



BITTER IS THE RIND.

BY

HAWLEY SMART,

AUTHOR OF "BREEZIE LANGTON," "A RACE FOR A WIFE."

"On serre l'orange; on en jette l'écorce."

"Aimons vite
Pensons vite
Tout invite
A vivre vite
Pensons vite
Au galop
Monde falot."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.




LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1870.

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BITTER IS THE RIND.

CHAPTER I.

AN ATLANTIC PASSAGE.

BURKE has told us "the age of chivalry is past," a remark constantly recurred to by those who insist on seeing this restless, striving, eager, excitable age through the most prosaic of spectacles; people who moan there is no romance left in this matter-of-fact world, though their newspaper might convince them to the contrary on an average at least once a week. The fact is, that the word chivalry is capable of very varied definition. If Burke meant that the days of those crusaders who sacked Jerusalem with

unexampled atrocity, who in barbarity and deeds of savage cruelty went far beyond the Moslems they came to subdue, if he alludes to the fierce cut-throat old robber barons of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and all the stabbing and brawling that succeeded; it is matter of great gratulation that the glorious old days of chivalry are over. Days in which the maximum of nerve and brute force, conjoined with the minimum of moral principle, were wont to be in the ascendant. But if by chivalry is meant heroism, a definition not exactly sanctioned by the dictionary, I most emphatically deny, for one, that its day is over, or for the matter of that anything like over.

Not twenty years are gone since Willoughby Moore went down in the blazing 'Europa,' having calmly superintended the embarkation of his regiment (Innis-killing Dragoons) into the boats—last man on board, and alas! fated not to

leave the doomed ship. Many a Crimean man can call to mind how his widow, to speak metaphorically, took up the burden that he had per force laid down, came out to Scutari, nursed many a wounded fevered officer through his weary illness, and died for her country, like her husband, as much as any other who laid down their life on the Inkerman morning. Not twenty years are gone since some three or four hundred men went down in their ranks on board the 'Birkenhead,' off the south coast of Africa, cool and steady as if on parade. Greville Brooke, the actor, in the wreck of the 'London,' and many a story of the Indian mutinies show that we can die quite as gallantly as those remote ancestors of ours. But the fact is we don't talk about it in these days. Our men and women of chivalry shrink from any allusion to their deeds of derring do.

Those swaggering old heroes of mediæval times, when they had slain or

otherwise got the better of their enemy, proclaimed it aloud in jubilant tones, they shouted themselves hoarse in exultations over their own prowess—the “caw me caw thee” principle was in full blast, and any plunderer of respectable pretensions kept his private “laureate” to hymn his praises. Your *beau sabreur* in these days smokes his cigar and shrugs his shoulders when you question him; finally admitting, placidly, as the result of severe cross-examination, “*Yes, I was there.*”

But to return to Fortie Merrington, whom we left dropping down the Mersey with the flood tide. He stood gazing for some few minutes after the fast receding tender, and then commenced pacing the deck. He wanted to think. Fripley had allowed him but little time for reflection; moreover he had arrived at that hunted, harrassed state, that it had been a perfect relief, quite a sensation of peace, after he had once assented to the New York

scheme, to leave everything to Furnival. Now he began to once more turn things over in his mind, and one point he came to a decision upon was this—that he would write to Katie from Queenstown. Yes, all his thought was for the girl he had loved and who had thrown him over without waiting to hear his justification. No thought for that other, thanks to whose loving vigilance he was now rescued from the debtors' prison that gaped imminent before him. True he was ignorant of all this; but as Fripley rightly said, it was hard he had left no kindly message for the actress.

Fortie dashed below and poured forth his tale of blighted love for Katie. We need not stop to look over his shoulder now, as we shall see that letter a little later on, when it arrives at its destination. It might have been grim satisfaction to Fortie in his present troubled state, could he have known how it would avenge him. That Katie's feelings were

fated to be exercised pretty much as his own had been by that bitter letter with which she had dissolved all tie between them -- tie which the dead Baronet it seemed would fain rivet once more. However, all this Fortie is not destined to know for many a long day. Meantime, his packet is made up and duly dropped at Queenstown, and the big steamer sets her head up channel steadily for the far West.

In times not long gone by, a voyage of this sort was a sort of hideous nightmare of discomfort. A blank waste of a month or six weeks of your life. But now-a-days, if you are a decent sailor it is pretty much like spending a week in a big country house, where you luxuriate in the bachelor's dens (as Pelham says, one of the great arguments in favour of matrimony,) and there is no shooting. There are always pleasant people moving along the Cunard Line; and if you fail to find them, I would diffidently hint that the

fault may perhaps lie a little on your side. I am sure in these big ocean steamers I have met pleasanter men and women than I have in many a country-house party. Theatricals, dances, of course you can have. Whist, and plenty of it. Social suppers replete with fun, harmony, and alas for the skeleton incidental to every feast, I must add indigestion. As for flirtation, it is quite part of the play, there never was a place in which it seems so quite a matter of course as on board ship. It is apt to wax rather too earnest in a long voyage. In voyages round the Cape, Cape Town and St. Helena were wont to see matrimony come of it; but there is not time or opportunity for that afforded by a Cunard passage.

Fortie took his share in all this, a little moodily it may be; but except perhaps in the one matter of flirtation did his devoir. The sea air did him good. The change from the old feverish

life still more. His moral nature got braced, and he enjoyed his modest evening rubber far more than he ever had done when playing five pound points at the Thalamus.

"You are very silent this afternoon, Mr. Merrington," said a pretty American girl, who with her father, was returning from having a look at the Old World, as they paced the deck together one day towards the end of the voyage.

"I'm sure I ought to apologise," replied Fortie; "but I am afraid I have nothing to say."

"Indeed! you ought," said his lively companion, "if that is the only excuse you can make. Do you know, papa and I often wonder what is taking you to America?"

"Very kind of you to interest yourselves in my behalf. Natural restlessness of the Anglo-Saxon, I suppose. Is it not fair to presume I have some curiosity to see it?"

“Quite so, only that is not the reason. I have travelled a good deal. One gets quick at recognizing those who are travelling for business, and those who are travelling for pleasure. You are doing neither of these!”

“For what, then, do you think I am travelling?” inquired Fortie.

“You won’t be angry if I make my guess?” she said softly. “To get rid of unpleasant memories, or bitter disappointment.”

“Why should you think so?”

“The listless, half-mechanical manner in which you do everything; but you are much better than when we started. We shall make you your own self again, the self I’ve never seen, when we get you into my country, with its bright sky and bracing air. Nobody could ever rally from reverses in your cloudy England.”

“Don’t think much of your approach, anyhow,” retorted Fortie.

They were off "the banks," where the climate smacks a good deal of our Eastern counties at unfavourable seasons.

"I shall go down now, it's getting so cold. You never will be serious," continued the young lady, turning round on him as she gained the top of the stairs leading to the saloon.

"Just what you accuse me of having been ever since we started."

"Not at all. You know what I mean well enough, though you affect to misunderstand me;" and Fortie was left to pace the deck by himself.

I really can't say much for him. Man has no business to disregard such fair challenge for flirtation as was offered to him here. Even with a pre-engaged heart, if you intend to neglect pretty girls in this wise, get married, turn hermit, or don't travel by the Cunard boats. In short, let society see as little of you as may be. Take to writing, a turning lathe, the destruction of big

game, or any other of the numerous pursuits that a beneficent age offers to misanthropical man.

The big ship speeds on, dashing the foam from her bows; the fogs of Newfoundland are left behind; soon Sandy Hook is made, and the pilot comes on board. Short time there is of it then; they steam past Staten Island, and find themselves speedily alongside the Quay at New York.

Rapid dispersion of those who, in some cases, have become more friends than acquaintances. Intimacy thrives like a hot-house plant between congenial dispositions on the high seas. It is like staying in the same house with people, with this exception, that you never can and never will stay in any house, in which you will have so much idle time on your hands as you have on board ship. I don't know what it is, or why it is, but under these circumstances, men ordinarily studious abandon themselves to cigars

and novel reading, without the slightest compunction. As for the ladies, they only know that there was no necessity for that fine old moralist Dr. Watts to denounce Satan as the promoter of indolence. "For Cupid finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," would be quite as true and scan equally well. However, the break up of the pleasant party has come, and individuals branch off, each down his or her little rivulet of life.

Fortie shook hands with his American friends, and handed the young lady into a very correct carriage that had come to meet them.

"Good-bye, Mr. Merrington;" she said, "and be sure it's not many days before you come and see us. We want to make New York pleasant to you as far as we can."

"I trust," said her father, "Mr. Merrington thoroughly understands that, and that we shall see him as soon as he gets settled."

Fortie bowed, and then calling a cabriolet betook himself to the Brevoort House. Now he was so far right, that a better hotel there is not in the city; but if put down in London with one hundred pounds in my pocket to seek for a livelihood, I should hardly think Long's or Limmers' a judicious residence. And in these comfortable quarters we must leave him for a little, while we glance back at one or two circumstances on the other side of the water.

CHAPTER II.

FRIPLEY RENDERS AN ACCOUNT OF HIS STEWARDSHIP.

THE day after his return from Liverpool, Furnival made his way out in the direction of the Regent's Park, and soon arrived at the modest residence of Lizzie Jerningham. He knocked, was admitted, and shown into the actress's sanctum.

"Well!" she said, as she rose to shake hands with him. "You have done my bidding, and all has been satisfactory, is it not so?"

"Yes, Lizzie, thanks to your gallant heart that would not see an old friend go down without making an effort to save him; we've done, I think, all it

was possible to do for poor Fortie. You make me quite ashamed of myself, to think that I should have needed your prompting to try and do a last turn for such a dear friend as he was. But I'd no idea he was in such trouble. How came you to know?"

"‘Women’s small finger-tips have eyes,’"

said the actress, smiling. "He wanted to commit murder for me, you know—we must return good for evil, though as Lady Brute says, ‘that may be a mistake in the translation.’"

"Yes, he fought your battle in that Dieppe business, Lizzie, though I fear it turned out little for your good or his. A man can never set a woman right with the world in that fashion, gross though all who know you hold the scandal he crammed down Halden’s throat that evening at the Thalamus. Yet the world won’t believe Fortie fought out of pure chivalry on that occasion."

“No,” cried Lizzie, as her eyes flashed. “I know the world speaks evil of me still on his account—you, for one, know how falsely. But think you we women feel nothing for a man who risks his life in defence of our fair fame. That world, I know, is sceptical ever of an actress’s honour; but men like you, who know us, know also that there are as good women and true amongst us as there are elsewhere.”

“Yes,” said Fripley, “I know that, and I don’t see what else Fortie could have done that evening.”

“Done!” replied the girl, bitterly, “done as many of you do—hear my name dragged through the mire with that deprecatory disavowal that tacitly admits its truth. Fortie Merrington was too true and loyal a gentleman to bear that. He would not hear a woman, who is proud to call herself his friend, traduced. Love for me!” cried the actress, bursting into tears, “he had none, or he had

had all mine—you know it. Some fair-haired girl in the country held his heart, and threw it from her when he was in trouble. I don't feel any very christian sentiments regarding Mr. Halden ; but I do hate that false love of his."

To say that Fripley had not a very fair inkling of the actress' love for Fortie would be absurd ; but he certainly was not prepared to hear her avow it thus openly. He was taken rather aback, and knew not what to say. He sat for a moment, thinking only, I am afraid, how handsome she looked in her grief, while Lizzie gave vent to a few passionate sobs, and then he began more clearly to recognise the nobility of character she had displayed. It was entirely through her means that Fortie had left the country. It was in obedience to her behest, that he had tracked Fortie to that wretched lodging in Kentish Town. It was she who had found the money

with which to give him a start in the New World. Yet with all this she knew he did not love her, and that he never would have accepted her help had he known it was hers. That bitterness against her rival was natural enough. She was not likely to feel kindly to her who had robbed her of what she so coveted. She knew none of the facts of the case—she knew only what Fortie had told her, that “he had shared the usual fate of soiled gloves,” and her contempt for the woman who could abandon a man, who loved her, in his troubles was boundless.

“I really am very sorry,” stammered Furnival, at last, “but—” and here he looked more nonplussed than ever.

“No, don’t—don’t,” said the actress, smiling faintly through her tears, “I don’t want speeches from you, Fripley. You’ve always been good and kind to me ever since I began. I know you would save me pain if you could. It’s

very foolish of me; there it's all over now," and Lizzie dried her eyes. "I know I should not have done, but I got fond of him before I knew it, and then the duel, for me too—and then—and then—well, I can trust my secret with you, I know. We'll never talk of it again, though mind when you hear of him, I must too."

"Yes, certainly; you shall always know all that I do concerning Fortie Merrington."

"It's a bargain," said the actress, stretching forth her hand. "Evil report or good report, mind."

"Bad or good, you shall hear;" replied Furnival. "We'll hope the latter."

"Yes, indeed; and now to talk of other things. When is your play to come out?"

"Ah, who shall say, there is no Delphic Oracle to consult—spirit-rappers throw no light thereon. As for Basing-

hall he never has time to talk to you about anything. Last time I saw him, he gave me the consolatory information. 'Can't be long first now. I put you up as soon as we have nothing else that will draw, and we must go in for a novelty shortly.' You have been a very principal hindrance for some time past."

"Ah, you mean in 'The Ball on the Roll.' So glad you like me in that; but it's a good piece all through."

"So it is; but it owes a good deal to your Rose Delmar, mind you play my heroine as well."

"What, Rosetta, don't be afraid, Frip-ley. I began studying it as soon as you gave me the MS. It's quite as good a part as the other. You'll not have to complain of me, I think. I like it much, and could play it now with four or five rehearsals."

"Thanks; I know I can quite depend upon you when my turn comes. And

now having rendered an account of my stewardship I must run away. Good bye, Lizzie, if there were a few more as true-hearted, honest-meaning girls as you about, it would be better for the profession and the world generally."

"Ah, traitor," cried the actress, laughing,

" ' Firm prudence will to things of secrecy
Give but an understanding, and no tongue.' "

Good bye."

Furnival thought a good deal about the actress as he made his way westward again. How handsome she had looked in her little tear-fraught gust of passion. "Wonder Fortie could have remained insensible to her charms," he muttered. "Suppose having fallen in love with that Miss Moseley first, he was clothed in armour of proof. She is a very nice pretty little thing; but she can't hold a candle to Lizzie Jerningham, as far as looks go in my humble opinion. Love!

yes, there's nothing like homœopathic treatment for that complaint, *Similia similibus curantur*. Fortie being saturated with the sweet poison was proof against taking the disease again, while on the other hand, there's no such cure for a severe attack as falling in love with somebody else. Heigho ! I've never had time for it myself of late," and Fripley's face softened, as he thought over a love of his college days, now dead and buried. I mean the sentiment not the personality, the goddess of that time being now the wife of a well-beneficed Essex rector, with whom Fripley is on the best of terms.

“‘ I remember the way we parted,
The day and the way we met ;
You hoped we were both broken-hearted,
And knew we should both forget.’

Yes, that's about the end of most flirtations, I suppose.”

CHAPTER III.

A LETTER FROM QUEENSTOWN.

THINGS at St. Helens proceed with the monotony incidental to most country neighbourhoods, where life verges closely on the organic. Sir Horace has installed himself at the Manor House, and report says, intends to resign his living in favour of Mr. Filander. Avarice is certainly not one of the new Baronet's weaknesses, he values money only as it may minister to his great ambition, which is power. He can be liberal enough with it at times; is never chary of spending it. So may be that rumour is right, and he is about to retire from a profession

for which he has no vocation, and gracefully provide for his zealous little curate at the same time. Sir Horace intends to be a great political fact at the next general election. Debarred from sitting in Parliament himself, he means to have something to say at the nomination for the county, and intends to make use of not only the votes and interest he can command, but to exercise all the energy of his character and his very considerable personal abilities in the struggle. Sir Giles has always supported the Conservative interest in a languid way, generally giving his tenants to understand they would vote in that wise if they cared about retaining their farm and holdings; but took so slight an interest in politics, that he seldom took the trouble even to give his personal vote. Sir Horace, on the contrary, only bides his time to prove himself a keen, unscrupulous, and active Liberal. At present he keeps his political opinions locked in his own breast, con-

scious that the declaration thereof will be more effective when the time comes. In electioneering, as in war, masked batteries are wont to bring trouble if not grief to the enemy. Sir Horace's plan, meanwhile, is simply to extend the De Driby influence as much as possible. Much to be done in this way by a clever energetic man, he thinks. Hitherto, though a magistrate, he has attended but seldom on the bench; now he is very regular, not only there, but at all boards and commissions of county or local importance, and speedily acquires for himself the name of a clear-headed man of business. A character that has much weight in the agricultural districts as elsewhere. All this of course has taken time, and I am merely telling you now how Sir Horace stood some months after his uncle's death, and what were his ultimate views.

It was just twenty-four hours before that wild November night that saw the

end of grim Sir Giles, and heard his last broken wanderings concerning the dead sister he had loved so well, and that other dead woman. The only two women who had broke through the crust of his cynic disposition in all his seventy odd years of life; it was twenty-four hours previous to that that Fortie sailed for America, and it was forty-eight hours afterwards that the blood rushed into Katie's cheeks, as the morning's post brought her a letter in the well-known handwriting.

News from Fortie, at last, she thought. No use watching her Birkett Moseley, though you also have recognised the handwriting, she will not read that letter before you or anyone. She thrusts it into her pocket unopened; the old man eyes her wistfully for a little, and then goes sadly about his daily business.

Katie goes slowly up to her own

chamber after his departure, and taking out her letter gazes at it earnestly for a moment or two before she breaks the seal. She knows now how she does love this man, whom she has "whistled down the wind" in her jealous anguish. What will he say? Can things ever be as they once were between them? Has he heard of that strange legacy (idea uppermost in Birkett Moseley's mind as he tramps over the home farm)? Was he sordid enough to try and win her back, now gold might accrue from so doing? Her colour came and went as she tore open the envelope and thought, better never hear of him again than in that wise.

"When you receive this, Katie, dearest, for so I shall ever hold you in spite of what has passed, I shall be well on my way to America. Look upon this as a letter from one who is henceforth dead to you, and all who

once knew him. Ruined past redemption by my own folly in this country, I am going to try to earn a living if I can the other side the Atlantic, and England is not likely to see me again for many a year. You were hard, Katie, very hard, in your last letter. You condemned me unheard. Never even asked, or gave me an opening for an explanation. I think I could have trusted you more fully. No hearsay evidence, no gossiping stories could have shaken my faith in your love or rectitude. It is as well as it is, perhaps, you are spared an engagement to a ruined man, though I myself should have set you free from any promise that bound you to my desperate fortunes. Do you give me credit for no honour, or generosity, Katie? I sought to conceal my duel from you to spare you anxiety; could I have guessed the story had reached your ears, I would have told you the whole truth. The day will doubtless come when you will

learn the true history of that affair, and then you will do me justice. That Miss Jerningham's name has been bandied about with mine, I don't deny; but upon what insufficient grounds you will in course of time discover. Under other circumstances I had seen you by some means myself, and explained all. As things were, there was nothing left but to free you from a hopeless engagement. You freed yourself. It was as well that way perhaps as any other. It was hard, I had trouble enough at that time, and it seemed cruel that yours should be the hand to pour the last drops of bitterness in the cup, 'the crowning sorrow.' Adieu! When you learn the rights of that story, you will know that I never swerved for one moment in my loyalty to you. Foolish in many matters, I was not much to blame about that Dieppe business. Think of me kindly, as one who still loves you as truly as ever man did woman, and who, whatever betides

him, will to the last think fondly of her who was once all in all to him.

“Thine, ever,

“FORTIE.”

Long did the girl sit musing over this letter. The tears were in her eyes, but there was a flush of triumph on her cheeks. He did love her after all, never had swerved from that love, and loved her still—that was the paramount idea in Katie’s mind; a faint smile curved the *mutine* mouth as she dwelt on this, and then again the tears filled her eyes as she thought of that cold note of dismissal. And he had received that in the middle of all his troubles. What must he have thought of her? He evidently knew nothing of his uncle’s death and will, nor of the strange condition under which she was an inheritor thereby. “No,” she murmured, “he writes in ignorance of all that has taken place here, as one who never expects to see me again, and

he tells me that when I know the truth about that duel, I shall see how I wronged him. Oh, Fortie! my darling, I believe in you now. Why, why couldn't I trust you all through!" and Katie laid her head upon the table, and wept bitterly.

Birkett Moseley, meanwhile, after a cursory glance over the home-farm, wends his way towards the Manor House, where he has an appointment with Sir Horace. On his arrival, he is ushered into the study where he is speedily joined by the Baronet.

"I wanted to have a little talk with you on some matters of business, Moseley. First, that Lymington property is in the market, I'm told. I think it would be almost worth my while to buy it. It joins on to us, you know, and would be a great piece of concentration for St. Helens. I might sell those Beamacre lands by way of paying for it, they'd pretty well do that, wouldn't they?"

“Meb’be they might if they were clear,” answered Birkett, “but there’s the mortgage upon them would have to come out of the purchase money.”

“Mortgage! do you mean to say that part of the property is mortgaged!” ejaculated Sir Horace.

“Just so,” and there was a twinkle of amusement faintly perceptible in Moseley’s eye. With a grim chuckle, he realized that the new baronet was about to commence cracking the nuts he had come into, and Birkett was of course aware how many bad ones there were amongst them.

“Is there much upon it?”

“As much as ever the lenders thought it would bear. It’s not poor Sir Giles’ fault if it ain’t more. He’d ha’ raised another two or three thousand on it if he could; but the lawyers said it wouldn’t do, it was saddled with as much as it’d carry.”

“It’s very vexatious, but of course

that puts an end to any idea I had of buying Lymington. Have you any idea why that money was raised?"

"I am thinking it'd be in part to pay the law costs Sir Giles incurred in his quarrel with Mr. Cunliffe about that right of way. But who can say, he was all'ays raising money for something or another."

"Do you mean me to infer that there are other claims on the property?" inquired the Baronet, eagerly.

"In course there are; but do you mean to say Sir Horace, they Lunnon lawyers told you note about the condition of the estate."

"No; what do you mean?"

"Mean! that you've only come into the comb, Sir Giles got through all the honey in his lifetime, and indeed it barely lasted that. Every rood of the property's mortgaged, and except just the home manor here, heavily too. I'se afraid, Sir Horace, you will find the actual income

very small to what you had a right to expect, if so be you've been in ignorance of all this."

"Indeed I have, Moseley, I didn't know that there was a claim upon the estate. What do you consider there is clear after paying interest on all these claims?"

"Only about three thousand a year, out of the ten that there should be by rights. Little enough to keep a place like St. Helens up on, an all. Sir Giles never seemed to find it enough in the days when he'd near double that; his troubles for money began, I reckon, before he came into the property at all."

"Yes, I suppose the old debts incurred in that precious life he led in his younger days were still hung round his neck. What necklaces we string for ourselves in those times of passion and imbecility," and Sir Horace stared moodily into the fire, as memory brought back the recollection of a collar of that kind he had once forged

for himself, the filing through of which had made him a poor man for some years, and had left him no chance but to obey his uncle's behest with regard to a career.

Old Birkett sat silently watching him. He had thought it probable that Sir Horace had not known the extent to which the property was involved. He knew Sir Giles was a man who kept his own counsel, and he himself was not given to babble; but he had never dreamt that Horace De Driby was in ignorance of there being heavy charges on the estate. He wondered that the London solicitor who had brought down the will had not given him some general information on that point, even if he had not gone into particulars.

"That's a curious clause," observed the Baronet at length, "with regard to your daughter and my foolish cousin."

"Yes, Sir Horace. It took me all of a heap like. I don't understand it now.

Sir Giles were clear mad when he heard about their getting engaged, and never saw either of them afterwards."

"No; but he did you."

"What's that got to do with it?" inquired the old man, jealously.

"H'm, I don't know. My uncle was waning in health and intellect latterly. People might hint an undue influence on your part."

"Hint and be d——d. I beg your pardon, Sir Horace; but you know as well as I do that Sir Giles' head was as clear as ever to the last—leastways, the last time I saw him."

"He wandered a good deal at his death, so Thompson tells me," rejoined the Baronet, quietly.

"Mebbe. I didn't see him die, poor man, nor for the last four days of his life. He never said aught to me 'bout Katie since Mr. Fortie left."

"And when are they going to be married?" inquired Sir Horace.

“Never,” rejoined Moseley, “with my consent. I dunno that I ever liked the match. I’m not likely to be more keen upon it now. Any way, all is over between ’em some time past.”

The Baronet’s insinuation had stung Birkett Moseley sharply. He had felt bitter enough against Fortie before. That letter Katie had received this morning, he made no doubt was to propose a renewal of their engagement, with a view to ultimately obtaining possession of this five thousand pounds, and Moseley was quite determined that his darling should not be allowed to link her fortunes with a reckless gambler who had wooed, won and forgot her, till the intelligence that five thousand pounds would accrue to him by their marriage had recalled her to his recollection.

“You’re quite right, Moseley,” said the Baronet. “Your daughter deserves better than to be sought for money. Impossible to say where Fortie may be

at this present, but I fancy he has gone pell mell to ruin, at a pace that would have astonished even the mother that bore him, and she had some experience that way; for Sefton Merrington, I've heard, possessed a faculty unrivalled in that line."

"He was a gay, gallant gentleman, anyhow," responded Birkett. "Poor Mr. Fortie never had much to go through. I'll wish him well for his father's sake, but never want to see him again."

"Well, Moseley, I'll not detain you longer, as that Lymington business is quite unfeasible. Good morning. By the way," he continued, as the old man gained the door, "you can never be quite sure what young people, who call themselves in love, may do. Of course, you think it is all over between your daughter and Fortie at present; but they may come together, and think fit to act without consulting you. It would be as well, perhaps, they should know

that, even if they fulfil the conditions, their claim to that five thousand pounds will probably be disputed."

"On what grounds, pray? Not that it's ever likely to be claimed."

"Time enough to go into my reasons should such call ever take place, which, you say, is not likely. I thought, perhaps, it might be as well you should know that all the same. Good day," and with an easy nod, Sir Horace gave Moseley to understand that his audience was at an end.

"Lord of a pauper kingdom," muttered the Baronet, "after all my scheming. Fool that I was, I never dreamt of this. I had no idea that my precious uncle, as Moseley says, had been licking up the honey in the hive all these years. I wonder, by the way, how much has stuck to that old rascal's fingers? When a good property goes to rack and ruin through a spendthrift proprietor, the agent thereof generally contrives to have

a fair share of the carcass. Seems to be no danger just at present of that five thousand being claimed. Still, three years gives time for considerable change of opinion. Don't think it would be possible to dispute it, still the idea that it will involve a law suit, and is by no means a certainty, might check them, unless very much in earnest. Yes, it was as well to hold out the threat to old Moseley. I am not sure whether I won't get rid of him; but I can't till he has shown me the ins and outs of all this tangible coil. As well too, perhaps, to keep the girl under my own eye till these three years are over."

Birkett Moseley walked home with a strong glow of righteous wrath pervading his system. He had of course not been blind to Sir Horace's hint at "undue influence having been used," and was quite aware that that would be the grounds on which he would dispute compliance with the clause in the will.

Though that clause was null and void already in Birkett's eyes, yet he was none the less fiercely indignant at the insinuation that it had been added at any suggestion of his.

"He don't think so," he muttered, "he knows better nor that a strange sight, but it suits him to affect to believe it. Horace De Driby, you're more dangerous a deal than Sir Giles, the old Baronet was a main good hater, but he never disguised it—he never forgave, but he fought you in the open. This one would have his fingers on your throat, before he let you know there was enmity between ye. He seems inclined to be a bit unkindly towards me too."

With these reflections he arrived at his own door, where he was greeted by Katie in a demonstrative sunshiny way, to which of late he had been little accustomed.

"Well, lass," he said, "I have had a long talk with Sir Horace, and he's

learnt two or three facts about the property that ain't altogether pleased him, and he's made a sort of charge against me which happen hasn't pleased me like. So that meb'be we shan't pull together much longer."

"And I too, father, have something to tell you, I heard from Fortie Merrington to-day."

"I know, girl. Reckon now he finds there's five thousand pound to be made by marrying you, he's willing to do it. You're not a soft-hearted simpleton, Katie, are you?"

"You're altogether wrong, father. He has sailed for America; he says nothing about marrying me, and looks on our engagement as at an end. I should say he knows nothing of his uncle's death."

"Then what does he write about?"

"To tell me how I've wronged him—that he never was false to me, and that when I know the true story of that duel I shall do him justice."

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“Then he don’t explain that bit of business?”

“No; I don’t deserve he should. I loved him and lost faith in him. I, who had pledged my troth to him, doubted the first time I was called on to believe in him against adverse testimony.”

“Dunno about that,” said her father. “It seems he has given ye no explanation about that story, and confines himself to a mere clamfashering, that he’s not to blame, and so on.”

“I gave him no chance to justify himself. Fortie did love me, and had told me so,” cried Kate, passionately, “and I lent my ear to a lie. Weak miserable fool that I was!”

“And why’s he gone to America?” inquired Moseley, eyeing his daughter, keenly.

“He says he’s ruined!”

“I’ve not much doubt, he says true. Look here, Katie, Fortie Merrington is a ruined man, he has behaved very

badly to ye; he writes you a fashing letter just as he leaves the country; he never explains aught about all the stories that are going about again him, only says if you knew all he's not to blame. My lass, ye did quite right when ye turned him off. The only thing he's done right for some time, is this just taking hissels off too."

"Oh, no, father! when all the world was against him, I should have been by his side. Now as he says I have placed the 'crowning sorrow' on his brow."

Old Moseley looked puzzled, Katie in her romantic rhapsodies, was getting a little beyond him.

"I dunno 'bout croons on his brow," he said, at length. "Gin ye'd place croons in his pocket meb'be he'd be grateful."

"You do him injustice, father;" replied the girl, "as I did also. We may never meet again, but I believe in him now."

“Ye’re like the women all over, wench, they allays get fonder of a man when he ill-treats them. This Horace De Driby, too, he’s crowing owre big for his roost too, I’m thinking. D’ye know what he says about your legacy?”

“No.”

“That it was I that persuaded Sir Giles to put that claim in the will, and that’gin you carry out the condition he means to dispute the payment of that money. H’d better take heed when he comes to close grips with old Birkett Moseley, he’ll meb’be chance an ugly fall he little dreams on. He’s no friend of yours, girl, I’m thinking.”

“No, he goaded me into breaking my promise to Fortie. If I can love, I can hate. Though I don’t know quite how, I’m sure he worked mischief both to Fortie and me. I don’t understand, father, what you mean,” continued Katie, her passionate, jealous, little heart throbbing fiercely, “but if you

can work injury to Horace De Driby, don't stay your hand."

Not a very christian like sentiment, but it must be borne in mind that Katie's feelings were highly wrought. She was angry with herself for her want of trust in her lover, she was disposed to be wrath with the world at large. She knew of Fortie's quarrel with his cousin; she knew that it was Horace who had carried the tidings of her engagement to Sir Giles. What wonder that her anger flamed forth against him, to whom she at present attributed all her misery. For she did love Fortie dearly, and woman-like, never perhaps more than now he seemed lost to her for ever. The bitter feeling too of having herself in great measure to blame, was, as usual, detrimental to a just view of the conduct of others.

CHAPTER IV.

SETH THORNDALE.

THERE is a great deal in the weather. Its effect upon the spirits of poor humanity is very much the same as it is on the barometer. It is so difficult to imagine trouble not being to be overcome on a smiling spring morning. Our griefs again sink into insignificance on a bright, clear, frosty day. One of those crackling *rimy* mornings that Pitt described as,

“Aurora musis amica.”

But take per contra one of those gloomy foggy days that arise sometimes in December, when the yet undelivered Christmas bills, prophetic often, double themselves

to the mind's eye. When with a handsome balance at our bankers, we have misgivings as to his solvency, when the most ordinary transactions seem beset with difficulties, and an incubus seems to weigh heavy on our souls. One friend of mine indeed welcomes such mornings with pœans of thanksgiving. He is passionately fond of shooting, but also immoderately addicted to the rites of Somnus. Early meets are sources of sore trial and tribulation to him. He chuckles over such mornings, knowing that he may perchance have time to breakfast ere the fog lifts, he describes them poetically as "*Nature protesting against the impiety of early shooting.*"

It is on a day of the latter description, that Fortie stands moodily smoking on what, weather permitting, which it just now does not, are the white steps of Brevoort House. He has been a fortnight in New York, and is no nearer solving that intricate problem of "what

he is to do" than he was at the outset of his career in England. He has not been altogether idle either. He has fairly faced the axiom that he must live by his own head and hands in future, and has made several abortive attempts at getting employment. Two or three chances that really looked as if they might have ended in his getting a moderate situation, came to nothing on account of his utter want of any testimonial. "Strikes me," he muttered, "that intelligent young men are plentiful as blackberries about this city, the balance of them too have been previously exercising their intelligence which I haven't. D——d odd feeling this, wanting a character, like a servant out of place."

Fortie's meditations were by no means easy. his money was of course steadily melting away. If you go for the cookery of the Brevoort and Delmonico's it stands to reason it must. "*La glace se fond vite au Palais Royal*," says the French proverb

apropos to prudery. *L'argent se fond vite* holds equally true of *La Maison Dorée*.*

“Think,” mused Fortie, “I’ll leave this, and strike up the country some where, ah, that’s the point, where! Wouldn’t be a bad idea to open Appleton, (the American Bradshaw,) and go as destiny may decide. Jove! an inspiration. I’ve clear forgot all about Seth Thorndale all this time. Best card I have in my hand too. Make him out to-day. Go and see him to-morrow, if no good comes of that, why the *Sors Appletoniæ* is still open to one. As for his American friends of the voyage, Fortie was far too proud to call upon them; he ascertained that they lived in one of the palaces of the Fifth Avenue, as indeed they had told him; but Belgrave Square might not indicate more to an American than Fifth Avenue did to Merrington. It was not till he had walked past those

* The “Trois Frères” of New York.

stately mansions that he perceived his friends were of the New York elect; for New York rejoices in an "upper ten," elect principally of fashion. Money, perhaps, may be a little more omnipotent than it is with us, though that can hardly be. The man must have little brains, indeed, who with unlimited credit at Coutts' could not surround his dinner-table with coronets if it pleased him.

Inquiries after Thorndale, speedily resulted in the intelligence that he was lessee and manager of the Cracknell Theatre. Didn't know where he lived, but the gentleman had nothing to do but to inquire at the box office there, and if Mr. Thorndale was not in the theatre they would tell him where to find him.

Much has been written about the utter solitude there is in being alone in a big city. It has been described as far transcending in its feelings of desolation

any experience of the desert, the backwoods or the jungle. Fiddle-dee ! There are very isolated lives led in big cities, no doubt, as there are on the wild moor or woodland ; but your fellow-beings are constantly eddying backwards and forwards under your eyes in the former case—their shrill cries of pain, rage or pleasure, must more or less smite on the ear. To a certain extent, you can but be a spectator of their joys and their woes. Imperceptibly you acquire an interest in your neighbours, though you may never exchange a word with them. You are not isolated from your kind with their manifold loves and afflictions, as you are in the other case. You may study life from your window ; watch, as I once chanced to do, a trio of young sempstresses stich hard for the six days and sally forth with jaunty though rather tawdry little hats on the seventh, all smiles and hopefulness. I used to wonder, poor things, where they went

to. I never knew, but always hoped they enjoyed themselves. The way they used to paste their poor little noses to the window when Sunday proved wet, seemed to make my look out on those days still more gloomy.

I once knew a distinguished officer of Her Majesty's Service who told me that he, at one period of his career, passed a twelvemonth on an outpost at the Cape with no other companion than "Oliver Twist." He was good company as far as he went; but, as my friend said, he knew him by heart at last. Of course he had some men under him, but to anyone who knows the discipline of our army, it will be patent that no desert could offer much greater solitude than he experienced. He shivered drearily as he told the story, and I fancy would have endorsed my theory strenuously.

Hipped by the weather, finding no conversible stranger in the Brevoort

smoking-room, and objecting strongly to be left alone with his own ruminations, Fortie suddenly made up his mind to go to the Cracknell Theatre. At all events he might make out something about Thorndale there. As he took his stall, (study of economics you see not progressed much so far,) he inquired whether the manager was in. The answer was in the affirmative. Fortie scribbled a few lines in pencil, and said.

“Take that round to him, please, and say I am in sixty-four stall in front.” He then proceeded to his place, and was soon lost in the business of the stage. Ere long, one of the box-keepers touched him on the shoulder, and said.

“Mr. Merrington, I think.”

“Yes,” returned Fortie.

“If you’ll step this way, sir, I’ll put you into Mr. Thorndale’s private box.”

Following his conductor, Merrington soon found himself installed in the lower

stage-box on the "prompt side," fitted up more like a small boudoir, with its sky-blue hangings, sofa and lounging-chairs, than the musty theatrical-box with which he had been conversant in London.

"Mr. Thorndale says he'll be in as soon as he possibly can," said the box-keeper, and vanished.

Fortie drew one of the fauteuils to the front, and fixed his attention once more on the stage. It was not, however, long before the door of the box opened noiselessly; but the sharp click of the snap-latch as it closed, caused Fortie to look round, and find Seth Thorndale at his elbow.

"Guess, Mister Merrington, I'm glad, some, to see you;" said the manager, as they shook hands. "Real friendly now, I reckon it, to give one a chance of showing you a bit of kindness this side. As a general rule, when we give you Britishers an invite to look us up,

should you come our way, you never do—you don't understand we mean it. I collided against one of your countrymen in Broadway once, who had dined me and done me all sorts of civility in the old country. I had told him over and over again, only just let Seth Thorndale know you're anywhere within two hundred miles of New York, and if you don't see the whole show, taste everything we've got to eat and drink, and are not put through two forty gilt-edged, you may kick me from the top of the Fifth Avenue to the bottom of Broadway. Sir, he owned, if he hadn't run against me he should never have hunted me up. Well, we had a time the fortnight he was here. Now you've come, Mister Mer-rington, we'll have another."

"Awfully kind of you, I'm sure;" said Fortie.

"Not at all;" laughed the manager. "I shall have to go away behind again directly; they are everlastingly wanting

me in a hurry. But you wait here, anyway, till I come for you, and we'll go and have some supper at the 'Van Winkle.' How did you leave Basinghall, Mister Furnival, &c.?"

Fortie explained that he had hardly ever met the manager of late, that Fripley had seen him off, and sent many kindly messages to him, Thorndale. And here a myrmidon from the other side of the curtain beckoned Seth away.

"Come along, Mister Merrington;" cried Thorndale, towards the close of the performance, putting his head into the box. "The curtain will be down in ten minutes, and I feel like supper all over."

Fifteen minutes more, and they were seated in the pleasant coffee-room of "the Van Winkle," listening to the pleasant splash of the fountain in its winter garden. I own to being rather Sybarite in my disposition, I have smoked my cabana in the midst of the summer

heats by the side of that fountain, till the true *dolce far niente* stole over one, and cigar and magazine fell from relaxed lips and fingers. But even then I always had an idea that to thoroughly appreciate it, the snow should lie three or four inches deep on the ground, that I should be revelling in the luxury of a tropical climate with the knowledge that the thermometer was below zero within a few yards of me; and yes, that a friend who was not a member should be asking for me at the door. That fountain, moreover, in some sense resembled.

“The fount that played
In times of old by Ammon’s shade,
Tho’ icy cold by day it ran;
Yet, like the sons of mirth, began
To burn when night drew near.”

I don’t mean that any particular change actually took place in its waters, but there most assuredly did in the languid smokers on its brink. It was wonderful how those used up loungers of that

pleasant winter garden used to recuperate towards midnight. How the adjoining billiard-room re-echoed with song and chorus, and many was the good story told around the queer little bar thereof. Exasperating little counter beset by thirsty souls, and with scarce space for three of the afflicted to apply simultaneously for relief. I recollect one memorable night, when the fun was fast and furious, we formed a chain from thence to the opposite mantel-piece, such chain as you have doubtless seen or read of, for the passing of buckets at a fire. The idea was eminently successful, and a large dépôt of brimming tumblers thereby secured—for once the little bar got fairly ahead of its work. Pleasant nights, verily, have I passed at “the Van Winkle Club.”

“Now, Mister Merrington, there’s only one thing to be done for you to-night, that’s ‘soft shell crab.’ Guess we’ll have some of them pretty well before you can

make out what they are. They're one of our first-class luxuries not vouchsafed to your little island—not room enough in your seas, I expect, for 'em to get their coats off in, or may be the weather's never warm enough. Here, waiter, soft shell crab for two, and a bottle of still hock—the old brand. Anyway," he continued, "whatever the reason may be we have 'em, and you haven't. Lines for you, as you'll say, once you've tasted them. Tomorrow you'll dine with me, of course. I must make you acquainted with my wife. She's always death on a talk with a stranger from the old country, though she's American bred herself, from her toes to the tips of her pretty fingers. I have got a lot of business to fix up in the day, or I'd come and look you up before."

"My dear Thorndale, you're kindness itself; but I have a bit of business to talk to you about presently," replied Fortie.

“Quite right, put it off till after supper, and we’ll go into it then. Ah, here it comes. Now tell me if soft shell crab isn’t a thing to dream of.”

“Jove! I hope not,” said Fortie, laughing. “Suppers are always dangerous. Don’t tell me this is fatal out of the common run.”

“Not at all. They rear children on it in the Bay State, and their men have plenty of muscle as a rule. We’ll show you the Central Park, Bloomingdale Road, and all the show, now we’ve got you here. If I can’t make a fortnight or more go pleasant to you in New York, cuss me if I won’t give up sociability, and run for President next spring.”

Amidst such badinage the supper came to an end.

“Come along into the garden here,” said Seth, “and let’s have a smoke. Now,” he continued, as they sat down on one

of the seats by the fountain, "you said you had some business to talk about. Out with it, and if I can do anything for you we'll reckon on it pretty near done."

"Well, if you can't," replied Fortie, gravely, "I've no one in New York can help me. It's no use beating about the bush, Thorndale; I'm here because I am ruined!"

"Eh! clean stock and barrel?" inquired the American.

"Just so!" returned Fortie, sucking at his cabana.

"Jehoshaphat! why I thought you were a swell with no end of money."

"Never had much," replied Fortie sententiously. "Spent and gambled away what there was. Should have been in gaol, if I had not left when I did."

Seth gave a low whistle and smoked on in silence. He rather hoped his

companion would be a little more communicative, but Fortie said never a word.

“Look here,” said Thorndale, getting rather more American in his speech as he got excited. “I said I’d help you, and I ain’t the man to go from my word. First, what d’ye want.”

“Employment of some kind to enable me to live. I’m not fit for a deal, but but I’ve had a good education, took a good classical degree.”

“That’s no use much here, go on.”

“Speak French well, and German a little,” and Fortie finished his speech with the old indifferentism of former days.

“You must excuse me, Mr. Mer-rington, I must ask you one question; you’ll promise not to be offended.”

“Certainly not.”

“Well it’s just this, recollect I want to befriend you. There’s nothing more

agin you than debt in the old country, is there?"

"Damnation!" said Fortie, starting to his feet.

"Guess you said you wouldn't rile up," drawled Seth, without moving.

"I did; but I couldn't conceive that your question would take such offensive form. As that is your view of the case, I'll wish you good-night."

"Sit down, man, sit down. What's the use of going off the track in that all-fired manner. Don't blame me; but you Britishers who come over to us in difficulties, are sometimes taking an infernal venient view of your own case. You must excuse me, Mr. Merrington, for being cautious. I honestly want to help you, but I aint going.—Creation! I've set fire to the magazine," and springing to his feet, Thorndale dashed forward and intercepted Fortie at the door. "Shake hands," he said, "and believe

I mean you well. Come back, have another cigar, and talk it over."

Fortie thus adjured, swallowed his indignation, resumed his seat, and waited to hear what Seth had to say.

"Waal, you see," resumed Thorndale, after a minute or two's thought, "coming to grief in the old country ain't much account out here. We've plenty of that sort. Some do well, others weren't born to get a decent living in either hemisphere. It'd be a saving if that sort went under quicker. Now if, as Mr. Lowell puts it, you

"'Ain't o' the meechin' kind that sets and thinks for weeks,

The bottom's out o' the Universe, coz their own gill-pot leaks.'

You'll do right enough. The question is have you got any bone left in you, or are you all run to gristle."

"I am good to try anything that I

can fairly put my hand to, that will enable me to live."

"Bone in that, if you act up to it. Recollect, money ain't made any quicker out here than it is at home without work. If you're good for that, I'll see you get a living any way; whether you do more depends on yourself."

"I only ask you to find me a chance. One thing, please! Don't fall into the error of thinking it's all pride, but recollect I was born and bred a gentleman. I am not particular, I give you my word; but don't try me too hard on that point."

"I can understand that; but you mustn't be too squeamish either, Mr. Merrington. Now you won't rile if I say something more. Look here, I was going to put you through a fortnight's everlasting spree, thinking you were just travelling round for pleasure. Guess we'd better scratch that programme out. You want to begin to make dollars right off,

I reckon. A fortnight on the rampage ain't a good way to begin. You won't think worse of me if, instead of taking you all round, I put you straight to business, eh?" and Seth looked curiously at his companion as he put the question.

"Quite the contrary; you will be doing me far greater kindness than showing me all the fun of New York. As you say, to see my way into making a living is my first object."

"You'll do," said the American, heartily. "Let's have one more drink on the strength of it. Here, waiter, a couple of 'John Collinses.' Bear this in mind. You've had a good education, and if you'll only put out what you're asked for, and stick to that, you'll get on right enough. But if you want to give us all your learning, you'll likely find you ain't got a deal."

They chatted on about indifferent subjects for another half-hour or so, and the

“John Collinse” (most seductive of drinks) being finished, departed.

“Good night,” said Seth, as they came to the corner of Ninth Street. “You look in upon me to-morrow about two at the Cracknell. I may have hit off something by then.”

“Good night, and many thanks,” returned Fortie. When he reached the steps of the Brevoort House, he paused and stood for a minute or two looking into the misty atmosphere, as if he were peering into his own futurity; then jerking the stump of his cigar away, rang. “First ray of light,” he muttered, “I have seen for some time. Wonder whether I can earn my own living?” With which diffident speech he passed into the hotel.

The result of his conversation with Thorndale was, that in less than a week he had left the Brevoort for modest lodgings in the vicinity of the Cracknell

Theatre, and was duly installed as the manager's confidential secretary, at a salary of sixty dollars a month.

CHAPTER V.

A FIRST NIGHT.

TIME slips away; it is some months now since Furnival and Merrington shook hands on the deck of the outward bound Cunard steamer. Fripley's play is announced to appear, and there is much gossip, &c., concerning it, in those clubs, cliques and coteries where the author is well known. Except in the way of business, it is fair to presume nobody goes through the toil of reading anything in manuscript. But whatever you might predict of an M.S., I defy your critics to deduce much from a rehearsal. The verdict of the British public is the sole reliable test, and even when the ordeal of "a first night" has been passed,

it is by no means an assured thing that your piece is safe. Many are the anecdotes connected with "first nights," but none ever moved me so much as that of the author of "The Roadside Inn." I forget the French title of it, for it is originally a French piece. How the author, too ill to be present at the first representation himself, requested some of his friends to bring him tidings how it went; how the first came in with hum's and ha's, and said its fate was dubious; a little later a second rushed in with the tidings it was hissed. Later again came a third, who reported the curtain had fallen among shouts of laughter. Inexplicable this last to the author, more bewildering than anything. He conceived he had written a tragedy; that it should fail, that it should be d——d, loath though he might be to admit it he could still understand. But that the curtain should fall on his tragedy midst the laughter of a well pleased audience

seemed incredible. Next morning he learned how the inimitable Lemaître had turned his tragedy into as successful a burlesque as ever was placed upon the boards, and the author was doomed for many a night afterwards to laugh at the wondrous fooling of the great comedian in Robert Macaire. I daresay he never saw it without a tinge of melancholy. He probably aspired to be a great tragic writer, but what saying is so true as "that if you once don the motley you wear it for life." More than one of our great comedians have to their dying day believed that tragedy was really their forte, and I for one shall never be quite clear that it was not the late Mr. Robson's. Still after having seen him in "Jim Baggs," there would have been much to divest oneself of before welcoming him in "Richard."

It is the same all through human nature. Men are always undervaluing the talents they possess and hankering after

those they have not. We attain success in one thing only, to thirst ravenously after fame in those others for which we are totally unfitted. Your great conversationalist would fain be in the first flight with the Pytchley, while he, who has led the field for a fast forty minutes over the Leicestershire grass lands, grinds his teeth over 'the doubles' that beat him in the salon. So few of us ever comprehend our *métier*, and even when we do are always wanting to gain distinction in some other line. There is infinite knowledge of human weakness in the old apologue of the man, who did not know whether he could play the flute as he had never tried. We all think we could play the flute if we did try. Sometimes we do and find what comes of it. The bitter guerdon of disappointed vanity, our reward on such occasions.

Furnival has written some three or four trifles for the stage before this which have met with success; but this time

he has aimed considerably higher. He aspires this time to succeed in comedy, a very different thing from catching the laughter of an audience with rattling farce, or smartish interlude. He has done moreover much pen and ink work, and has seen his writings in the fell grip of angry critics ere now. He has born such castigation with philosophy; but he is strangely nervous to-night for one who has already faced the public so often.

The trifle that proceeds "Sound at the Core" is just finishing when he encounters the manager.

"Capital house, Fripley, my boy, whether they have come to d——n you or sing hymns in your praise, I can't say, but London's dramatic critic world muster strongly in front to-night. Hope to heaven you're a hit. Think of all the paint and scenery I've lavished on you."

"Yes, bad business for both of us,

Basinghall, if it don't pull through; however, a couple of hours will put me out of my misery."

"A couple of hours! I'll tell you in five-and-thirty minutes, whether it's safe or d——d. Mediocrity I can't predict about. See you again presently."

The bell rings, and the curtain rises on "Sound at the Core," which may be briefly epitomized in this wise. Rosetta Carden, left an orphan in the hands of a rascally guardian, is persecuted by him to confer her hand on his son, which will effectually stop any inquiries regarding Rosetta's fortune, a circumstance highly inconvenient to be inquired into, inasmuch as it has gone the way of most unsuccessful speculation.

John Maddison, the son, has already married secretly the niece of his father's housekeeper; but not daring to admit it, is constrained to play into the hands of his sire, suffering thereby terribly

from the jealous paroxysms of his wife, whom he sincerely loves, and who, in her capacity of Rosetta's maid is often an involuntary witness to her husband's compulsory love-making. Rosetta has no relation that she knows of, but a cynical morose old uncle, who has hitherto treated her with disdain—never even answering the one or two passionate letters she has indited him in her troubles. She now makes the acquaintance at some county ball of a young naval officer, who it turns out knows her uncle, not only intimately, but in fact owes everything to him. He insists that Sir Roderick (the uncle), though much reviled by the world, is really, with all affectation of cynicism, a thoroughly good-hearted man at bottom, in short "Sound at the Core." Acting on this hint she escapes from her guardian, and after various vicissitudes including a capital scene with Sir Roderick's crabbed jealous old house-keeper, whom she at length wins over

by her gentleness, tact, and winning ways, accomplishes an interview with her uncle, who following in the footsteps of his housekeeper, is completely won by her artlessness and beauty. Marion, the maid, also has her troubles in the shape of a dissipated cousin, a lawyer's clerk and ardent admirer, who has attained an inkling of her relationship with John Maddison, and leads her a hard time of it; but when upon his pressing his suit with unwonted vehemence, she admits her concealed marriage, he also proves "Sound at the Core," and renders considerable help in the recovery of abstracted documents relating to Rosetta's fortune. Of course Rosetta marries the young naval officer, who turns out to be Sir Roderick's adopted son, and the absconding of Maddison *père* to foreign shores is connived at by all interested.

Furnival stood still restless at the wing, when Lizzie Jerningham suddenly appeared at his side dressed for Rosetta.

She gave him a little nod—"Hush!" she said, seeing he was about to speak. "Don't interrupt me, now, I am just going on. Come and see me after the second act." Another minute and the actress glided on to the stage, and received the customary ovation with which the audience of the Hyacinthe was wont to welcome her.

Nervous and irritable, Furnival rushed round to the front, and from the back of a stage-box looked on at the rendering of his work. The first act played smoothly, and the audience, though there was not much applause were obviously interested. As the curtain fell, the manager entered the box.

"Shake hands," he said, "all safe, Fripley, my boy, we've got 'em. I know the British Public, bless you, well; he's amused now—there'll be plenty of applause before the drop falls—this next act will fetch 'em. The Jerningham's not got to the pith of her part yet,

and they haven't seen Sir Roderick. It'll do—don't look so lugubrious over it. If the audience could see the author this minute, they'd goose the comedy certain."

Fripley gave a nervous laugh, as he replied, "Well I'm glad you're satisfied so far."

"Just ran in to tell you so. Heaps to do behind there; that baggage, Fanny Ainsley—dances in the after piece, you know—has got into her head I can't do without her. Off just to disabuse her on that point. Just heard of a girl down Liverpool way who could kick apples off her head," and Basinghall disappeared.

He was right, however, about the comedy. As the curtain fell on the second act, the applause was loud and long. Rosetta and Sir Roderick had evidently both established themselves with the audience.

Furnival passed behind, and inquired

for Lizzie. She was gone to her dressing-room, he was told, having to change, but wished to see him before the third act began. Congratulations poured in upon him from the company. Be a great success, they augured.

“It’ll do, Furnival,” said the veteran actor who was playing Sir Roderick. “Lizzie Jerningham and I have our best scene to come yet, and Marion and her cousin have a good bit of business again in this act.”

Just before the bell rang, Lizzie appeared.

“Are you satisfied, Fripley?” she said, with an arch smile. “I only wanted to tell you I’m quite sure it’s a success. Come round, and we will congratulate each other after it is all over; but I’m always too nervous to talk much on a first night till the drop is down. I never was afraid of it all along, but I wanted to tell you so after the second act as I felt I should be quite certain then.”

“Due in great measure to you,” replied Furnival.

“Hush! no compliments. I don’t know what I shall expect you to do for me. I forget just now whether it’s a bonnet, a dress, or whitebait I want most,” and with a saucy nod the actress took her place at the wing whence she was about to enter.

The third act ran merrily through, and at the fall of the curtain there was a general call for Rosetta, the author and Sir Roderick. Fripley led on the actress, and the trio bowed their acknowledgments.

“‘Sound at the Core’ is an established fact,” said Basinghall, as he met them on the O.P. side. “Furnival, my boy, I believe you’ll live to write something clever yet.”

“You don’t think that is, then?” inquired Lizzie, laughing.

“Never you mind, my dear, that’s between Fripley, I, and my conscience.

I think you deuced clever in it, and that's enough for you to know."

"You shocking old barbarian!" laughed the actress, as she ran off to change her dress.

"Ten thousand thanks to you, Lizzie," said Furnival some few minutes later, as he put her into a cab. "You dreamt out Rosetta for yourself, and made much more of her than I ever conceived."

"Very nice of you to say so; but I *am* glad it is a success, and that you're satisfied with the girl you once fought hard to get a chambermaid's part for. Good-night."

"Paid, with much interest, for that little turn," laughed Fripley, as he shook hands.

The cab rolled away. Furnival looked meditatively after it some seconds, and then lit a cigar. "Fool Fortie was," he thought, "to fall in love with that little thing in the country, and this girl ready to jump into his arms. Wonder whether

she's got over it; don't ask so much about him as she did. However, as I never have anything to tell, perhaps that's not much criterion. Think I'll look in at the Thalamus. No chaff to signify can come out of 'Sound at the Core.' "

"All hail my Fripley!" said Blatherwick, as he entered the smoking-room. "Let's congratulate you, old fellow. I and several of your pals went down to assist at the funeral of your piece; but by Jove! sir, it's t'other way on, I assure you; I noticed two or three weak-minded people actually laughing, kept awake myself, and Skef, there, pretends to have been amused."

"Very much pleased, indeed, Fripley, and so was he, only he wont admit it," laughed the novelist. "His cursed professional bias prevents his admitting anything. He looks upon it as dangerous, and likely to involve self crimination."

“You know me better, Furnival. Bay leaves, I regret there are none on the premises, but the old civic crown of parsley has been freely voted you, and is at present weaving down stairs. Joking apart, ‘Sound at the Core’ is a very pretty comedy, and deserves the good run which I’ve no doubt it will have.”

“Disappointed myself,” chimed in Dick Sydenham, the reviewer, “what there was, was good; but considering the time Furnival’s been sitting, it was but a small clutch of chickens. You ought to have given us five acts!”

“Pooh!” retorted Blatherwick, “Sydney Smith’s joke upon Rogers would apply to our friend here; that when he makes a couplet, he goes to bed, the knocker is tied, caudle is made, straw is laid down, and the answer to all inquiries is that Mr. Furnival is as well as can be expected.”

“Something in that wise,” laughed

Fripley, "no, Dick, the fact is, to paraphrase Longfellow,

" 'These ideas of mine come slowly,
And they come exceeding small.'

Five acts would have been a great mistake, as you would have let me know when my turn came."

"None of your mock modesty, sir!" exclaimed Blatherwick. "D—n it, we sent for you to congratulate you on your little ideas to-night. You don't expect the house to order a duchess to kiss you, as they did Voltaire, at the first representation of *Méropé* in Paris. Besides, there's not always a duchess at hand. But what the deuce put it into your head to really work."

"What puts it into most noddles, Blatherwick; I wanted money."

"No, did you; why didn't you come to me?"

A burst of laughter met this interrogatory, for though Blatherwick made a

large income by his profession, his extravagance and carelessness were such, that he was notorious for being in a state of chronic pecuniary difficulties.

“By the way,” inquired Fripley, “has any one seen Jim Halden of late?”

“No, the Honourable Jim committed social suicide over the last Derby,” replied Sydenham. “The Thalamus has not seen the light of his countenance since, and I, for one, cordially admit I don’t care if it never does again.”

“Abroad, I suppose,” said Furnival.

“German baths and gaming tables, I should think; but he disappeared and made no sign. That’s however, the usual routine — suppose he’s followed it!”

“You know Gyp Forrester, Fripley, don’t you?” asked Skeffington.

“Yes! fellow they call the Gipsey, because he’s always on the wander, never supposed to have staid a consecutive

month in any one place. What of him?"

"That's the man. Well, Gyp anyway was in town the other day, and at some dinner or other happened to be placed next Lady Frothington, she's an *esprit forte*, you know. Goes in for woman's rights and intellect, and all the rest of it. She put Gyp through his paces wonderfully, found out he had just come back from Hayti, the Andaman Islands, or some place nobody but Gyp ever dreamt of going to, and wanted to know all about women's wants and weaknesses in those parts. But Forrester was impenetrable, he hadn't observed, he hadn't noticed, it wasn't in his way. At last my lady lost all patience with a man who had seen so much and derived so little from it, and demanded with considerable asperity, 'Do you never think, Mr. Forrester?'

" 'Not if I can help it,' replied Gyp, leisurely adjusting his eye-glass. 'Tell

me it makes one's hair come off at the top.'

"My lady gave him up at once; she makes up a good deal, and perhaps wished she had heard that before."

"He's quite right!" cried Blatherwick, who was a little bald. "Take example by me, and keep a steady curb on your imaginations, young people. Thought that last novel of yours a little flat, Skef. See, now, you didn't think much over it."

"No," said Sydenham, "next time I review a man's book I'll insist upon seeing his photograph first, and if he's not commenced a tonsure treat him accordingly. Save one a deal of labour."

"Has anyone ever heard aught of poor little Brant since his smash?" inquired Fripley.

"Not a word," said Blatherwick. "Gone down, poor innocent little soul, in the gulf that's agape for those who play neither wisely nor well. Do you

recollect that night he lost such a lot of money here by the rashest of play. When Jim Halden, after watching him for some-time, muttered. 'He'd be described by Imbecile out of an Idiot mare if he was mentioned in the 'Stud book.'"

"Suppose Halden had a good deal to say to his ultimate grief?" inquired Skeffington.

"No, I don't think very much," returned Fripley, "Jim had not become the leg, he wound up as, in those days. I can't say a deal for Halden, but he never had a chance. Turned loose on the town with no profession, a small income and unlimited capacity for spending money, he was bound to go to the bad."

"Yes ;" rejoined Blatherwick. "Many do that. While we recognise their folly we've pity for their weakness. But Halden, my dear Fripley, was an irredeemable blackguard by nature, and had he begun life in a lower sphere, I should probably

have encountered him in the course of my professional duties before this."

"Well I throw up my brief for the defence," laughed Furnival. "Any one going my way home."

"No, Fripley; as the successful author of the new piece, you might be worth walking once down 'the Row' with to-morrow, but I don't think you'll create much sensation at this time of night. Pleasant dreams, my son," said Blatherwick.

CHAPTER VI.

ROXANA AND STATIRA.

THEY have been weary months, these last six or seven for poor Katie. Down at St. Helens her warm, passionate heart has fretted itself bitterly over that farewell letter of her lover's. Folk with her warm sympathetic temperament are ever in extremes. She cannot believe too much in Fortie now to make amends for having once doubted. It is in vain that her father has pointed out gently, that that farewell letter is simply negation not exculpation. Katie has recanted, she has returned to the old worship with all a renegade convert's enthusiasm. But this is not altogether good for her. In this quiet country

neighbourhood where she occupies the invidious position of Mahomet's coffin, the girl is literally almost debarred society of any kind. Nothing left her but sit and brood over her love. Not altogether wholesome for a girl, when the prospect is fair of such love being realized; but when her passion is as hopeless to all appearance as Katie's, weeds are engendered that sometimes in the end overpower life's blossom. The girl undeniably looked ill; she was thinner and paler than of yore, but worst sign of all, the old vivacity of life, the merry sunshiny laugh had departed. The springs of existence seemed run low. I don't mean that,

“The wine of life was on the lees,”

but the effervescence had surely departed. If not on the lees the wine was flat. Katie moved about with a listless air, that betokened but little interest in what went on around her.

Birkett Moseley sees all this—his keen eye is quick to note change in his darling. More than one bitter execration hisses through his set teeth regarding Fortie, as he notes Kate's languid manner. Sceptical he, altogether, about there being a fair side to that Dieppe story, he believes moreover firmly that Fortie had heard of the will, though he never alludes to it in that letter from Queens-town.

“No;” argued the old man, “his difficulties compelled him to leave England—difficulties may be that five thousand pounds would hardly have extricated him from *now*. He knows that he has three years in which to compound with his creditors and realize this marriage. Never with my consent, though—never, damme!”

Meanwhile, Moseley, whose relations with Sir Horace bear resemblance to an armed neutrality, finds himself called to London on business; what if he should

make a fortnight or three weeks of it, and take Katie with him.

“Oh yes, father!” said Katie, when he proposed it to her. “I shall like that, St. Helens has grown very *triste* of late. I am haunted by the old memories; let us go away anywhere for a time.”

“Well, we’ll go and see all the sights in town, and if that don’t bring back the roses to thy cheeks, we’ll ha to try the sea a bit, lass.”

And so it came about that in a few days more, Katie and her father were comfortably established in lodgings in Sackville Street. Katie had seen nothing of London previously. As a child, she had once or twice passed a week there with her father, and been dazzled with pantomimes, and oppressed with awe at the Polytechnic. But this was her first visit there as a woman, and her blue eyes opened wide, and she marvelled greatly, after the manner of country-bred girls in general. True, she had seen at her *pension*

some little of Paris, but by no means sufficient to prevent her being considerably awe-struck with the busy, simmering, bubbling, effervescing caldron of our own metropolis. Of course they commenced a round of theatres. Birkett Moseley, when in town, rather held that you should see something every night. It was not long before Katie discovered that one of the most talked about pieces playing just then was "Sound at the Core," and that it was written by that Mr. Furnival whom she had known so well at St. Helens a little more than a year ago. Perusal of the cast told her, moreover, that the heroine was enacted by Miss Jerningham, her fancied rival, cause of all her troubles, and for whom Fortie had done battle at Dieppe.

It was but natural her anxiety to see this piece should be intense. She would have been greatly interested in it from the mere fact of having known the author well. But when to that you conjoin the

fact of seeing the woman who accidentally, or wrongfully, had cost her so many tears, you may judge if Katie had not powerful motive for wishing to see "Sound at the Core."

Birkett Moseley had some little difficulty about getting places for two or three days. The piece was a hit, and stalls were scarce. But he, like his daughter, was curious to see this comedy for much the same reason. And three or four nights afterwards they took their places in the stalls of the Hyacinthe, and awaited the rising of the curtain.

"Now," thought Katie, "to see this woman, whom I once feared had proved my successful rival." Loyal as ever, you see, now to that plighted troth. Like many another woman she had spared herself many tears, and her lover much anguish, could she but have been as loyal when the pinch came. When jealousy enters into the argument it is rarely that either sex can show any pretension to

reason in their deductions ; but the weaker sex are proner to rush to conclusions than we are. They are naturally more impulsive, besides they have a bigger stake in the affair.

“ Love is of man’s life a thing apart ;
’Tis woman’s whole existence.”

Man can take to drink, gambling, or hard work in such untoward circumstance, according as the weakness or the stability of his temperament may move him. But woman can often do nothing but sit down and weep by the desecrated altar and overturned deity that the iconoclast has bequeathed her.

Birkett Moseley’s reflections were slightly different. Now, he thought, to see this painted baggage who was Fortie Merrington’s “ light o’ love.”

The curtain rose, and the play began. I have been prolix enough about it already, no need to follow it further.

Katie sat breathless through the first

act. "Oh, father!" she whispered, with honest admiration, and serious misgivings, "she is handsome!"

"Pooh! Yes, child, them play-acting women all look well anow on the stage, but they tell me ye'd not know 'em off. All paint, patches, and gewgaws."

"No, father, you're unjust; we are too near to be deceived, and my glasses are very good. Miss Jerningham is indebted to very little beyond her own beauty."

"I've been at many theatres in my time, and I tell ye it's so, wench," retorted Moseley, dogmatically, and with the air of a man who knew all about it. Though truth to tell, he had been as much surprised as his daughter at not discovering more palpable signs of paint, &c., on the actress's handsome face. But he put it down with fine old conservative obstinacy to "the artfulness of they play-acting women," whom he really did regard in the puritanical light of

being so many snares of the ungodly. To Birkett Moseley, there was a *soupçon* of wickedness in attending a theatre—a flavour that often gives zest to the attraction. He was speaking truth when he said he had been at many theatres, but he had always regarded such visits as intense dissipation, slightly seasoned with vice. There are a good many people who occasionally attend dramatic performances, more or less imbued with this doctrine. The Christy Minstrels are orthodox, but you must draw the line somewhere. That aroma of vice, existent to them in such representations, exercises quite a titillating sensation on their moral systems.

Mr. Helps tells us “It was a glass of water the wicked old Frenchwoman was drinking, when she exclaimed, ‘Oh! that this were sin, to give it a relish.’” If the drama do but please, such people enjoy the relish as well.

But gradually as the story progresses, both Katie and her father become ab-

sorbed. Their interest in Rosetta's troubles rises high, and at the termination of the second act, Lizzie Jerningham has so completely, to their minds, merged into the character she represents, that they forget to criticize the woman in their admiration of the actress. When the *finale* having come, the curtain descended, and Lizzie, in obedience to repeated plaudits, appeared before it to curtsy her acknowledgments to the audience, Katie turned to her father and said, "She is handsome, and her acting perfection. I should like to know her."

Ere Birkett Moseley could reply, a voice close behind said, "Miss Moseley, I trust you have not forgotten your old manager of St. Helens long since," and Furnival leant over and shook hands with them. "Ah! these people are not going to stay the after-piece. If you'll allow me, I'll come next you," and suiting the action to the word, Fripley stepped

over the backs of the stalls into the seat next Katie.

“Indeed, I have not, Mr. Furnival, nor all the pains you took with me. I must congratulate you on your piece, and tell you how much I have been pleased with it.”

“Thanks. Yes, it is doing well; owes a good deal, though, to Lizzie Jerningham’s Rosetta, and Everett’s acting of Sir Roderick.”

“Miss Jerningham is very clever in it,” replied Katie. “You know her of course?”

“Yes; known her since she began. She was kind enough to think I did her a good turn in her early days, and has never forgot it. She is too conscientious an actress, too fond of her art not to always do all she can with a part; but I do believe she was as anxious about ‘Sound at the Core’ as I was myself, and took, if possible, extra pains about Rosetta in consequence.”

"She is very handsome," remarked Katie.

"Yes; good as she is handsome, and works very hard. You have been a little initiated into the mysteries, Miss Moseley," continued Fripley, laughing, "and know there is a good bit of hard work connected with the profession, or else all the bullying I subjected you to at St. Helens must have faded from your memory."

"Indeed it has not. You were an awful taskmaster. Oh, dear! those incessant rehearsals. What a tyrant I thought you then. They were very pleasant, too," she continued, dreamily.

"Delicate ground," thought Fripley. Though he knew of her engagement to Merrington, he was unaware of how things might stand with them now. "Yes," he replied, "pleasant days that are fled. Poor old Sir Giles, I see he has gone since then."

"Yes; I miss him much, little as I

saw of him latterly. I want to ask you a question. Is Miss Jerningham very rich?"

Fripley stared.

"Rich! no. I don't know; I shouldn't think so. Why?"

"Oh, I thought all actresses who had made a name also made lots of money."

"What the deuce is she driving at?" thought Fripley. "So they do after a bit; but Lizzie does a good deal towards keeping her home together."

It was now Katie's turn to be astonished. She had never contemplated the fact of Miss Jerningham's being married, although she knew that actresses often retained their maiden name on the stage.

"Home!" she ejaculated, with open eyes.

"Yes; she has got an invalid mother, and a father who is engaged in the orchestra of one of the theatres; but

their home would be a very humble one were it not for Lizzie's assistance."

Old Moseley's face at this announcement was a study. He had listened in silence to his daughter's conversation with Furnival, and such a *bouleversement* of his creed left him with eyes and mouth wide open. The idea that an actress could be in private life a hard-working, virtuous young woman, assisting considerably in the support of her parents, was to him past comprehension. He would have as soon believed in Papists going to Heaven, Southdown sheep, fixity of tenure, or dereliction of rents. He said not a word, but he put down Furnival as "an awful leear."

"You look surprised, Miss Moseley!" said Fripley.

"I confess I am; I had pictured a successful actress's career very different."

"The outside world generally do. There are bad people and good in most

walks of life, and an enlightened public are very prone to classify from the black sheep. But I must be going. Where are you staying? I should like to call, if you will allow me, and perhaps you may think of some way in which I can be of use. If I can, I shall be only too happy. We Londoners, at all events, are conversant with the tricks of our own Metropolis!"

"Good-night;" said Katie, as Fripley after noting their address shook hands. "Don't forget to come and see us."

"Deuced odd!" thought Furnival as he walked homeward, "that she never asked after, or alluded to Fortie. Knows more than I do perhaps. What a fool I am!—of course—she has somehow heard of the Dieppe business and its cause, that accounts for all her curiosity about Lizzie Jerningham. Wonder whether she knows the true story—probably not."

Katie sat in the window of her sitting-room the next morning, lost in thought.

She had, as we already know, acquitted Fortie of disloyalty to her on his own testimony. Her father had pointed out to her that her lover had confined himself to bare denial of the charge, had admitted that his name had been mixed up with the actress's, and not even condescended to further explanation. That he, Moseley, held him no bit exonerated, he had made Katie fully understand. Yet the girl in the fulness of her love, and the bitterness of her remorse at what she deemed her harsh and hasty treatment of him, now believed implicitly that did she but know all that story no blame could attach to Fortie.

“I must and will know it,” she mused, and then she formed the strange resolve of seeing Miss Jerningham herself. But how? She did not know her address, nor could she think of any method to learn it. Yes, there was one chance, if Mr. Furnival should call she might obtain it from him. But though Katie anxiously awaited him

best part of the day, Fripley never made his appearance. You must recollect she was in utter ignorance of how prominent a part Furnival had played in that duel, and though it did not in the least escape her that he, as one of Fortie's intimate friends, was probably cognizant of all the ins and out of the story, she could not make up her mind to question him on the subject. If what he had told her concerning the actress was true, as she did not in the least doubt now, she thought she should have more courage with one of her own sex.

I know in these days of "women's rights," &c., when the old maxim has been paraphrased into "that one man is as good as another, and a woman a great deal better." I know in these days of the "Gospel of Hermaphroditism," it may seem absurd to suppose that a woman should hesitate to question a man upon any point on which she wished to be informed and thought he

possessed information. But happily all our fair English girls are not yet imbued with these lofty sentiments, which end chiefly if one may judge from transatlantic experiences, in the holding of marriage vows as a somewhat worn out institution, and domestic supervision as a thing below contempt. The "Mrs. Jellabys" of the second generation generally combine the former with the latter creed of their less enlightened predecessors, and a little anarchy creeps into the social system in consequence. Rights of women and spiritual affinities are near of kin. It is mere want of strength of mind, not to go for what our cousins call "the entire platform."

However, the next day Furnival did call. He rattled pleasantly on about the topics of the day, touched lightly on those pleasant times at St. Helens, joked a little about Mrs. De Driby; but never once alluded to Merrington, as Katie hoped he would. Some slight constraint

he noticed, in the girl's manner, but his *savoir vivre* did much to lessen that.

At last he rose to depart; Katie felt it must be now or never.

"You have never mentioned Mr. Mer-rington," she said. "Please sit down for one moment," and Katie gave a great gulp to conceal her agitation.

"I know but little about him, Miss Moseley, further than that he is in America. His last letter short and bitter enough, and dated some months back, merely said he was earning a decent livelihood—all he cared about now. Forgive me if I intrude on a delicate subject; but I was, of course, aware in what relation he stood to you at one time, and not knowing but what he did so still, thought it probable you might know more about him than I did. I was afraid to ask you, though, as one of his dearest friends, I should be only too glad to get news of him."

"Mr. Furnival," replied Katie, with a

trembling lip. "All is over between Fortie Merrington and myself. I am afraid I dealt hardly with him, and that it is all my own fault. God knows I loved him truly all the same, though I had not the patience I should have had. But it is too late to talk of all this now. You can do me a great favour! Will you?"

Fripley was rather taken aback. He had all a man's horror of a scene, and he could not but see that Katie, in her emotion, was verging very near tears.

"Anything in my power I'm sure, Miss Moseley," he stammered out. "Tell me what you want and I will do my best."

"Give me Miss Jerningham's address."

Taken aback before, Fripley was dumbfounded now. "Here's a pretty kettle of fish," he thought. "Knows all about that Dieppe affair, evidently."

Means to have it out with Lizzie. Rival Queens, Statira and Roxana over again. Wonder what Roxana will say to it all. Shall I or shall I not? By Jove! I don't know what to do."

"I know you can if you choose, Mr. Furnival, and you will be doing me a great kindness."

"I don't for one second deny but what I can," returned Fripley. "But I am perhaps aware of more than you give me credit for knowing. Do you really think it would be judicious that you two should meet? Then again, I do not know what Miss Jerningham would say to it; I think it could only be painful to you both. You had better reconsider this, believe me."

"I have considered it well. Will you do what I ask you?"

"Yes; I think it a great mistake and fancy both you and her will be of the same opinion afterwards. And she with right to blame me for being the cause

of it. Still I will risk her anger, as you believe it will be of service to you."

"Thanks!" said Katie, with a smile. "You will see I was right shortly."

Having pencilled down the actress's address, Fripley took his leave, with many misgivings as to how Lizzie would regard his so doing. But now that she had progressed thus far, the carrying out of her project seemed to present greater difficulties to Katie's mind. This interview with Lizzie Jerningham that had looked so easy a few hours back, could she but know how to accomplish it, appeared much more formidable as she came nearer to it. Though young, she had yet seen enough to know how bitter woman can be to her sister, when their affections are unfortunately bestowed upon the same man. Of man's dreadful tribulations in such case, she never thought, nor are they, fortunately for Merrington, much tangled in the woof of his life—he had not played

Macheath's rôle voluntarily, whatever other sins he might be guilty of. Still Katie began to have serious misgivings whether Furnival had not been right, when he had recommended her not to seek this interview, despite all he had said in praise of the actress's private life.

She mused over it most of the evening. Thought about it, indeed, far into the night; but when she rose next morning she was fully determined to see Lizzie whatever the consequences might be.

There was a strange flutter at her heart, as with nervous hand she rang the bell at the little house up by the Regent's Park, wherein Fripley had informed her the actress dwelt. What if, after all, she was but to be laughed to scorn by a successful rival and learn conclusively that Fortie's protestations of love were all a sham, his last letter a mere mockery. But the die was cast, she must go through with it now. "Miss Jerningham was at home," said a neat maid-servant

who answered the door. Would she step in, and Katie was ushered into what Lizzie called her own den. There she had to wait some few minutes, at the expiration of which the actress entered the room, bowed gracefully to her visitor and begged her to sit down again.

Katie's first glance was one of honest admiration. She had thought her handsome on the stage, but as Lizzie stood before her in her fresh morning toilette, she was fain to admit that she had hardly done her justice. No doubt now that the accessories of art had little to do with her beauty. Katie's embarrassment was painful.

"Very glad indeed to see you, Miss Moseley," observed the actress quietly, "whatever may be the cause that has induced your visit," and here Lizzie paused, and to use a homely expression, took stock of her visitor. She was perfectly well aware who that visitor was. Fortie in his rhapsodies had

so often talked to her about his love, that the name of that yellow-haired girl in the country had naturally come out. She had heard it also from Furnival. The jealous vigilance of a woman in love was not likely to let such name escape her memory. "Pretty, very pretty though *petite*," she thought to herself, "but I should have fancied little in her to captivate a heart like Fortie's." So very different from her own type of beauty, she could be hardly expected to mete strict justice to her successful rival. Your stately dames always feel some slight contempt for their fairy-like rivals, who run them so hard in the race for conquest. But these lesser daughters of Eve equally turn up their pretty noses at the pretensions of their more imposing-looking sisters, and upon the whole maintain their ground very fairly.

"I was anxious to make your acquaintance," said Katie, after a pause of some few seconds, speaking hurriedly

and nervously. "First let me thank you for the great pleasure you gave me the other night in Rosetta."

"Delighted to hear you were pleased, I'm sure," said the actress, with a courteous inclination of her head, and then she awaited calmly for her visitor to unfold her errand.

Katie felt this would never do—she had not come to talk platitudes. How was she to begin? Better to plunge *in medias res* at once, so with a slight tremour in her voice, she continued, "I want to talk to you, Miss Jerningham, about one who was—nay, is still very dear to me."

She stopped, hoping that here she was at all events to get some slight assistance in her difficult task of breaking the ground, but Lizzie uttered not a word.

"You know who I mean—Fortie Merrington," cried Katie, in quivering tones.

"Yes, Miss Moseley ; one who, to use his

own expression, had met the usual fate of 'soiled gloves' at your hands."

"Oh, no! don't say so; did he say that of me?"

"Yes, he did;" returned the actress, bitterly, "and in my humble opinion, deserved better treatment, whatever his offences. He was not likely to tell me the story, but those who know him well would be the last to believe ill of Fortie Merrington."

"Yes, I was a fool—a weak, unbelieving fool!" cried Katie, passionately, "I yielded at last to all they told me, and doubted his loyalty despite my own convictions."

"Ah!" said the actress. "You, who had pledged your troth to him, were one of the first to abandon him in his time of trouble. And you come to a friend of his, who has been, and would be, ever true to him through good report or evil, to make moan over your want of faith. Those who know me, Miss Moseley, will

tell you I am not uncharitable, but you need expect little compassion at my hands."

"I am so miserable," said Katie, with streaming eyes. "If you would but answer me one question."

"Why should I? I know nothing of you. You caused him bitter anguish. Don't expect commiseration from me, now that it seems to recoil on your own head."

"Because," said Katie, starting to her feet, "nobody can but you, because I appeal to you, as a woman, to help a sister who is suffering from the consequences of her own mad folly. Because I know at heart whatever you may pretend, that you are what you simulate in Rosetta, 'Sound at the Core.' Lizzie Jerningham, pity me! you know what I would hear," and to the actress's unmitigated astonishment, Katie threw herself at her feet, dropped her head into her lap, and gave vent to hysterical sobs.

Statira taking this unexpected line, certainly made Roxana's part difficult. Still, she was not going to abandon her *rôle* all at once. If truth must be told, I am afraid Lizzie's passion for Fortie had much abated of late. When the frost of indifference meets the opening petals of love, it is wont to die down apace. When to this, you add the complete absence of the idol, and the strenuous attentions of another man, it is odds upon that old day-dream rapidly dissolving into mist. Furnival had of late been most devoted to the actress. "It is hard," as says George Elliot, "for a woman to be sent away with her precious spikenard rejected," and Lizzie knew no word of farewell had been vouchsafed her by that graceless wanderer, who could never have left England's shores without her assistance. Many a heart has been caught on the rebound. It is so soothing to woman's pride, when she has loved in vain, to meet with one who, appre-

ciating her value, will yield that affection for which she has so craved. Not much wonder, that after all these months Lizzie could look back upon her *affaire* with Fortie with very tolerable resignation. Yet there remained to her a great amount of veneration for the man who had risked his life in defence of her fair fame. Though her love had died out, she felt a chivalrous loyalty for him who had been so loyal to her.

There was a dead silence, except for Katie's choking sobs, between those two for some moments. Suddenly the actress clasped Katie's head between her hands, and turning the tear-stained countenance up to her own, look fixedly down on it.

"Then you do love him?", she said at last; "and knowing he loved you, how dare you treat him as you have done?"

"Please, please don't be angry!" said Kate, still sobbing. "They told me he

had fought for you—loved you, and had forgot me.”

“Hush!” said the actress; “be still. If you won’t be calm, how can I tell you anything? Now you shall know as much as concerns you. I thought you came here from idle curiosity; but as I think you *do* love him, you shall know the truth. Fortie Merrington was a very kind and dear friend to me. In my position, you may guess the world, when they saw us often walking together, put him down as something more. He risked his life in defence of my honour at Dieppe. The men, my dear, who will do that for any woman, are scarce now-a-days. He fought for the right, though, perhaps, that did not do me much good. It shows how little, when you, his affianced bride, about whom he has talked to me for hours, were willing to believe the worst of the pair of us. Listen once more. Swear first, you will never open your lips to any one about what I tell you

now. Promise !” said the actress, almost fiercely.

“I swear,” faltered Katie.

“I am going to drop this like gall into your ears. I want you never to forget it, if you should ever become Fortie Merrington’s wife. It may be a lesson to you about mistrusting him in future. When all the world turned against him ; when his uncle would have no more to say to him ; when his friends forgot him and his creditors did not ; when the girl who had sworn she loved him, condemned him unheard and threw him from her with contemptuous curtness ; when Fortie had near succumbed to the troubles that beset him—then that woman, for whom, not loving her one particle, he had risked his life simply because men lied concerning her, thought she did no harm in usurping the place that should have been held by those nearest and dearest to him. She had previously offered, nay begged, bear in mind, to be allowed to help him all she was

able; but he was too proud to let the woman for whom he had spilt his blood empty her purse into his lap. But to those who really mean to succour it is easy enough, and Fortie Merrington, when deserted by kith, kin, friends and acquaintances, was unknowingly enabled to fly the country through the instrumentality of her whose quarrel he had so chivalrously taken upon himself. Recollect, Kate Moseley, that it was not the woman he loved who believed in, trusted and assisted him at the last, but one who only owed him a great deal of gratitude which she can never repay. Now what have you to say?"

"Nothing!" sobbed the girl, "least of all to you who have done so much, while I, weak, miserable fool, have done all I could to add to his troubles. Stop! Yes, I have something to say. I, who have been jealous of you so long, now crave your pardon; now thank you from my heart for all you have done, and the lesson

you have taught me, and now tell you that in my eyes Fortie was right. Yes, you were a woman worth fighting for, as for me, he can never think of me again. Better he never should, than think of me as he must," and throwing herself back, Katie wept bitterly.

For a few minutes the actress was silent, she was revolving many things in her own mind. Rapidly she reflected that Fortie never had cared for her, that at present she was by no means so much in love with him. There was a prospect here of aiding him; he would come back some day, and no one knew better than she how his heart was bound up in the girl weeping at her side. There was a good deal of chivalry in Lizzie's nature. Katie's last speech too had moved her greatly. Passing her arm round the girl's waist, she drew her gently to her till the tear-stained little face rested on her own bosom.

"Hush!" she said, "don't cry any

more. If I have spoken sharply to you, I am going to preach words of comfort now. You have judged me rightly at last, and I know will never think ill of me again."

Katie said nothing, but nestled closer into the embrace that held her.

"He loves you as truly as man can love woman. Fortie has been as wild as most men upon town, I fancy; but never let any one persuade you that he has swerved from his constancy to you."

Poor Katie lifted her head, and the actress quietly pressed her own lips on the quivering mouth upraised to hers. "Now," she said, "you must go, for I have lots to do. Come here and see me whenever you like, I shall be always glad to see you. When you leave town you must write to me occasionally, especially if you have news to tell me of Fortie, who is and ever must be dear to me."

"Good-bye!" said Katie, "I can't thank you, it is impossible. I can only

hope to make you understand in time what I feel. I have not much longer to stay in town, but I shall come to see you nearly every day, if I may."

"The oftener the better, I want to know you. Good-bye!"

And so Roxana and Statira parted.

"Ah! I was right," said Katie, as she walked home, "and Mr. Furnival was wrong. I felt I ought to see her."

The two saw a great deal of each other during the remaining ten days that Katie stayed in London, and became fast friends. Both had so few friends of their own sex, that the bond was easier cemented than had it been otherwise.

CHAPTER VII.

ZARE.

MANY months have passed since Fortie Merrington emigrated, and commenced life in New York. The sharp lesson he had received had not been thrown away, he had put his shoulder steadily to the collar, and was now a very different man from the fast, reckless spendthrift who had turned night into day, and gambled so fiercely and so foolishly. He was no longer Thorndale's secretary. Seth had treated him with great kindness, and after some months' of probation had procured him a far more lucrative situation.

"Waal, Merrington," he observed one morning. "You've done my work right

well. I told you at starting if you'd any bone left in you I'd stand your friend. I've tried you myself first of all, to see if you were likely to turn out good for anything. You're just about the best and willingest secretary ever I had. I'm real sorry to part with you, but I have a chance now to put you in a deal better thing. You see I can't afford to give you more than I do, because I can always get the work done for that money. Not perhaps quite as well as you do it, but near enough to serve my turn. But Craig and Jackson happen to want a confidential clerk to manage their foreign correspondence. I've recommended you, and it's good as settled if you consent. You'll get about double the dollars I give you, and have a chance eventually to really do something for yourself."

Fortie was full of protestations of gratitude, and at the end of the month transferred his services to Messrs Craig and Jackson.

“You’re on the free list, youngster,” said Seth at parting, “and I’ll be always glad to see you, when you’ve time to come round to the office for a talk. Reckon you’ll do now, or I’m no judge. Don’t be too long before you look in.”

Those who had known Fortie during his brief but reckless career in England, would have been thunderstruck at the change wrought in their whilom comrade. Fortie had ever been very particular in his dress, and his natural good taste had always stood him in good stead in this respect. Quiet and perfectly unobtrusive were his garments. You could not for the life of you have told what he had on five minutes after parting with him; but you could have spoken confidently to the fact that he was well-dressed. A flower in his button-hole in those days, whatever it might cost, was as much part of his dress as gloves or pocket-handkerchief. Now he tramped steadily down to his office in a loose shooting-jacket, and

troubled the *bouquetière* no longer. In these compulsory changes of habits and manners, it is ever the trifles that press most heavily upon our feelings; and perhaps the bitterest moan Fortie ever made over the life that had gone, was the first time he encased his feet in those square-toed eccentricities which are looked upon as boots in America.

His whole character seemed changed, but it is easy to trace the causes of such change. The gay, light-hearted boy had first become the feverish, restless gambler, with nought but his pure love for Katie to prevent the moral destruction of his nature. Then succeeded that stage of reckless despair, wrought by his utter ruin both as regards income and affections. Now he worked doggedly, but not hopefully. The work killed reflection. Capacity for work had come with employment, as it mostly does with the young. He could not see at present much to look forward to; he felt no wish at present

to return to England. Why should he? Discarded by his mistress and family, it offered but slight attraction. To a man of his habits, it had been at first a hard struggle to live upon his salary. Such acquaintances as he then made were little to his taste, and Fortie took to spending his evenings in reading. A more isolated man in a big city could hardly be than he was at this time. He was on confidential and friendly terms with his employers, occasionally even dined at their gorgeous mansions; but the silent reserved Englishman was not a favourite with the gay lively ladies of those establishments, and it led to no further intimacy. Seth Thorndale was his sole intimate, and the only infraction of his solitary evenings were those occasions on which he dropped into the Cracknell Theatre to have a gossip with him, and a word or two with some of the other *habitués* he had known in his secretary days there.

Yet with all this, Thorndale had never once asked him to his home. Fortie knew that he was married, kept a very nice establishment, and mixed freely in one of the very pleasantest coteries in New York. He had heard Mrs. Thorndale described as a very handsome lady-like woman, clever, and highly accomplished. He had once ventured to ask if Mrs. Thorndale had ever figured on the stage, but had received a decided negative.

“Good gracious! no. Old Singleton has scraped together a very tidy pile, it ain’t likely he’d let his daughter appear before the public. She’d have been a hit if she’d ever faced the floats though, for she’s real handsome, and can sing above a bit; I heard her once at an amateur concert.”

Such was the answer he received from his successor at “The Cracknell,” a man who had New York theatrical life at his fingers’ ends.

So Fortie continued his solitary life. He had even made a little money, not much, for he had but little to risk. Still his situation gave him the opportunity of investing a hundred or two hundred dollars profitably at times, and he had made a few cautious ventures here and there which had turned out lucrative. Moreover, his way of living was not expensive. At times his thoughts would wander back across the Atlantic, but he had trained himself into the belief that Katie could never be anything to him now; that his life in England was a thing of the past, not to be resumed, at all events, till some remote period. He had written briefly some two or three times to Furnival. Had in his last letter enclosed him a bill for that hundred pounds which had enabled him to fly from England. But beyond saying that he was well and doing well, he said nothing. He sent a kind message to Lizzie Jerningham; but from his tone, evidently con-

sidered that she and Furnival belonged to that past life from which he was completely severed. A moody, curt letter, as from one who had but little to look forward to.

Fripley read it to the actress, when he took her the enclosed money.

“I don’t like it, Lizzie!” he said. “It’s so unlike Fortie Merrington’s old bright self. I should think, poor fellow, he was in hard straits out there; but he could not have repaid this money if that had been so.”

“You don’t understand him, Fripley. I do. He is still true as steel to Kate Moseley. He looks upon that engagement as dissolved for good, and no other has taken her place in his heart. It’s not often you men love in this wise, and therefore I am not surprised you don’t comprehend Fortie. But I do know how he loved her, and what’s more, know, little fool, how she still loves him. I must not call her names, though, for I

am very fond of her now ; and went, as you know, to stay a week with her this summer, when I got a little out of sorts. Still, I always scold her for the way she treated Fortie about that Dieppe business."

"And you think," said Furnival, with mock gravity, "that Merrington is the only man you know who could love in that fashion?"

"Oh ! I don't know," replied the actress, laughing, "there certainly should be one other, if all he tells me is true!"

"And don't you believe it is?"

"Ah ! yes, I am afraid so. It's been told me so often now, you see, I've come to believe it, and should be very sorry to think otherwise."

"Well, you'll never need to, Lizzie, dearest !"

From which fragmentary conversation, we may gather that Furnival and the actress have arrived at a satisfactory understanding of late.

One morning in August Fortie received a note from Thorndale, asking him to call, as soon as he could get away that afternoon at the Van Winkle, as he wished particularly to see him. He was a little surprised at this missive, as he knew The Cracknell was closed, and he had fancied Seth and his belongings were away at one of the watering places. Nobody who can help it spends August in New York, any more than they do in London. Still, he knew Thorndale was a man who had many irons in the fire besides the theatre.

Soon after five Fortie made his appearance, Seth welcomed him warmly.

“I’ve ordered dinner at six sharp, and you must stay and dine. I want you to help me out of a particular fix, and I guess you’ll do it if you can. Now you’ve stuck to business ever since you began, close as bees in hiving time. I want you to get leave and come for a three days’ outing along with me. Shan’t cost you

a red cent, and you needn't be proud about that, for I'd give five hundred dollars to any man who'd do what I'm going to ask you to."

"You know I'd do anything to help you," replied Fortie. "But you know I'm a poor man, why don't you offer me the five hundred dollars if the service is worth it, that's what I should like to know?"

"Because I know your English notions. You wouldn't do it for me if I did. You'd get in as all fired a tantrum as you did once before when I asked a delicate question. But you'll do it for nothing slick enough if you can, and I reckon, though I've never seen you try, you about can."

"No fear of that, what is it?"

"Waal, it's just this, I want you to ride a race for me. Never knew a Britisher who didn't think he could do that; but I've an idea you can do a little more than that. Have you ever ridden one?"

“Yes, I’ve ridden a few steeple-chases in my old Oxford days, and a time or two on the flat at country meetings, and have ridden to hounds from a boy.”

“Whoop, Creation! I thought so. I shall put the double on old Solomon yet. Turn him as green as West India pickles. Now look here, Merrington, I’ve had a spell at most things, and amongst others have done a bit on the turf in my day. I’ve given it up mostly; money’s a deal easier made out here in other ways. But I’ve entered a cleverish horse, I have, for the Saratoga Hurdle Race, and got some pretty considerable bets on him. Now, there ain’t above half-a-dozen men in these parts that can ride a race at all, let alone one over hurdles. Our citizens, you see, don’t care about riding over obstacles, and we’ve no fox-hunting to educate us. Waal, the darned cuss I had engaged to ride for me has thrown me over. I guess how it is. Old Sol Mattocks has got a five thousand dollar

bet with me on his horse agin mine. He's smart, is old Sol, very smart, and I reckon he's got my man—paid him pretty considerable not to ride. He thinks now, I'll be bound, that I can't get any one in his place—leastways, that can ride at all. Now, if you will only help me to do Sol Mattocks, I shall be eternal grateful."

"I've no doubt I can get three or four days' leave, and as for the remainder, I can only say, Thorndale, I'll do my best. If you can't do better for yourself, I should like to give the horse a gallop or two before I ride him. You see, I'm out of practice rather, and it's just as well we should make each other's acquaintance before the day of actual battle."

"By Gosh! you'll do. I ain't going to think of any one else. We'll go down to-morrow, and if we dont give old Sol Mattocks fits before the end of the week, may I be sky-uglied."

The next evening saw them safely deposited at Saratoga, that most wonderful of American watering-places. Picture to yourself a broad dusty road running up an avenue, with a mosaic *trottoir* of tile on either hand. On each side, a succession of overgrown summer hotels, surrounded in every case by a deep shady piazza or verandah, generally raised some two or three feet above the roadway. Numberless chairs are scattered about these piazzas. Gaily-dressed ladies lounge and flit about them. Bright eyes flash upon you in every direction, and, owing to the weakness of American women for diamond rings, one might almost say bright hands too. You see no country or sea-side dresses at Saratoga (the latter, in an inland watering-place, I don't know why you should). We come here to be seen, to flaunt our richest silks, to make three toilettes a day, to exult in our wealth, and rejoice that we are in a spot which is tolerably inaccessible to Lazarus.

The ladies wear no bonnets, nobody thinks of going out till the sun has neared the horizon, and a parasol is sufficient protection for crossing the street to pay visits at adjoining hotels. People dine early at Saratoga, for the most part at the primitive hour of half-past three; there is nothing much to do during the heat of the day, while the delicious cool of the evening is devoted to dancing, driving, flirting, &c. Moreover, Saratoga cookery is a relict of the dark ages. You do not dine, you merely eat, and, therefore, it is as well to do that when it interferes not with other pursuits. There is but one place in the wicked sanatorium where the *cuisine* is attended to, and that, I am sorry to say, is associated with faro, roulette, poker, and similar speculative amusements. But none of the lords of creation consider a day at Saratoga finished, until they have had supper at Morrissey's.

“Come along, Merrington,” said Seth,

after they had duly handed over their baggage to the waiters. "I want to introduce you to my wife. She will be anxious to know my champion; she knows the fix I'm in, and is very much interested about the event. It's not the money, but she don't like to see me beat in anything I go for. Women never do; they hate being beaten. Ah! there she is," and Thorndale made his way across the piazza to a tall, dark, handsome woman, who, dressed in rich and most becoming toilette, was seated near the railing overhanging the street. Two or three men were talking to her, but as she caught sight of her husband, she rose and exclaimed, "What! back already? That looks like good news."

"Yes, Zare, I think so. I guess I've brought back the right man with me. Let me introduce Mr. Merrington to you."

"Mr. Merrington!" ejaculated Mrs. Thorndale. "Excuse me," she said, ex-

tending her hand with a most winning smile to Fortie, "if I am a little astonished at finding that you are to be our champion; but I have heard so much of you from my husband, that I almost feel as if you were an old friend. I have often wished to make your acquaintance; but never thought of making it in this shape. Why I have not known you before, you must ask my husband. I think he will admit that you are one of the few of his friends that I don't know."

"Quite right, Zare. But Merrington knows me well enough now to know that it was not because I did not like him."

Fortie stared in mute amazement. He had often wondered why Seth had never asked him to his house. His present employers did occasionally, and yet he was not half as intimate with them as he was with Thorndale. He had never troubled his head very much about the matter,

but had always vaguely supposed that Mrs. Thorndale had rather set herself against knowing a man in his position. Then he had pictured Seth's wife as something very different, and was not at all prepared to meet the graceful, lady-like woman who greeted him in that capacity.

"You must both be famished. Run in, Seth, and order something to eat, and I will take care of Mr. Merrington till you announce it in readiness. Do you know," she continued, motioning Fortie to a chair by her side, "you were a mystery to me for some time, Seth always talks about his friends. It is very seldom I hear of them long without seeing them, and I like that; of course, I can't say all my husband's friends are mine, but for the most part they are. I don't know that he ever talked much more about anyone than he did about you, yet he never would allow me to send you an invitation. They say," she continued,

laughing, "we women can't keep a secret. I can tell you something more, you can't keep one from us, when we've made up our minds to know it. I told Seth so. It took me some little time, but after a few months I found out why I must not know you, and told him whenever I did, the first thing I should do would be to tell you. Can you guess?"

"Not in the least, Mrs. Thorndale. Your husband has been very kind to me. If I ever thought about it, I concluded in the position I now hold—"

"Hush!" interrupted the lady, "we don't think so much of those things out here. Anyway that was no obstacle, let alone what we knew of your position in your own country. No," and here Zare burst into a ringing laugh. "It was Seth's paternal interest in you."

"What?" said Fortie.

"Ah!" she said, "you wouldn't give my rattle-brained husband credit for so much forethought; but this is what he

did think, Mr. Merrington, though he never told me so. He knew you never had worked hard, he thought you meant to do so ; but that the less distraction you had for a time the better. He wanted no temptation thrown in your way ; and oh, I'm so sorry," she said with laughing lips, "but they will call my house a pleasant one."

"I've no doubt of it," replied Fortie simply.

"Mind you come and try after this. But here comes Seth, pray run away at once, I'm sure you're famished, and we've all a tremendous interest in your-well being just now."

"Come along, Merrington, I've managed to negotiate for some grilled bones, and when we have finished them we'll go down and see how the pools are selling."

In the United States they have no professional book-makers. Nothing that answers to "the ring" of the English

turf. Betting on all their large race courses, or as they term them "tracks," is carried on by this system of pool-selling, the invention of a "Dr. Underwood," who must have realized a considerable sum by his labours.

Their hunger appeased, Fortie and Thorndale strolled down to "White's Hotel," made their way upstairs, and entered a large uncarpeted room, the principal furniture of which seemed to be unlimited benches. In the centre was a small table, on which were a couple of candles, writing materials, and a cash-box. Seated thereat, with a ledger before him, and a large packet of yellow tickets at his right hand, was a slight pale youth, this was Underwood's secretary. Behind the table stood a little man with a pair of dark, restless eyes that seemed to be everywhere (and goodness knows at his business they need to be), a shrewd face, overflowing with good humour, and a full mouth, the

twitching corners of which betoken the taste for fun inherent in its possessor, this is the Doctor himself, now in full swing of his vocation.

“Faix, gentlemen,” he said, “you’re fuller of dollars than ever I see ye, upon me sowl, ye’re right; in the present depreciation of the national currency, it’s mere waste of time saving it. For all ye knows, ye may be losing ten cents on the dollar every day ye keep it. Now I’m going to sell an unlimited pool on the Hurdle Race. Here’s Charlestown, Zigzag, Reserve, Wild Rose, Garibaldi and George Owen, so good a lot that t’would puzzle ould Nick himself to pick the worst of them. Anyone of them safe to win, if nothing gets in front of it. How much shall I say for first choice. It’s no use, gentlemen, I’d do it if I could, but there’s no time to wait while you get your cheques cashed. The man who has most greenbacks in his pocket bedad, he gets it right off. What

will I say now, shall we begin at five hundred dollars to save time, or put it up at one hundred to promote sport. Eighty, thank you, sir; eighty dollars gentlemen. One hundred and twenty, and thirty, and fifty and five. At one fifty-five, gentlemen—the privilege of showing your judgment in selection going for a song—and seventy, that's better, it'll be a dacent pool yet; think, it's only greenbacks, they are better to part with than keep any-day. All done at one seventy, going, going, gone."

The buyer steps up to the table, pays down his money, gives his name which is entered in two ledgers, in one by Underwood, in the other by his secretary, and receives a ticket of yellow card-board, as below.

"What do you choose," inquired the Doctor.

"Zigzag," replied the buyer. The name of the horse is entered on his ticket and he drops back to his place.

UNDERWOOD'S RACING POOL.

Pool Room, Ball Room, White's Hotel.

No. 39 Pool.

Saratoga Meeting, 186—.

Thursday.

Horse's name	.	.	.	Zigzag.
Buyer	.	.	.	C. Metcalf.
Amount paid	.	.	.	170 dollars.
Total Pool	.	.	.	

“That's old Sol Mattock's horse,” said Seth, “they've made him first favourite, by Gosh! Reckon that fellow 'll find he's chucked a hundred and seventy dollars into the fire, before the week's out.”

“Now,” resumed the Doctor, “first choice is gone, but what's the matther of that. The gentleman, if I may be so bould, was not good at choosing; av it was picking a wife he was, I'll go bail he'd be more careful and not have over-looked the best of the bunch the way he has. What shall I say for second choice; shure yez know as well as I do that the winner's still to the fore. Fifty, thank

you, sir, but deed they'll never let you have him for that, sixty." &c.

And so the bidding went on, till second choice was sold for one hundred and ten, and the buyer stepping up to the table gave the name of Wild Rose.

"Two hundred and eighty dollars in the pool," resumed the Doctor, waving his auctioneer's hammer, "and faith! worse guessing at the winner never I saw. Ye're no judge of public performances, gentlemen, if you don't give me a good bid this time. It's the winner I'm still offering to you. What shall I say for third choice?"

"They think I'm treed," said Seth, "I'm going to bluff a bit now. They fancy I've no one to ride. Keep your eye on that fat dark man opposite and see how he takes it, I'm going to wake him up just a little," then turning to the Doctor, he said, "one hundred dollars."

"Bedad, here's some one at last who knows something about it. Now, who

means buying the winner," and Underwood's keen dark eyes twinkled.

As Seth had predicted, the stout dark individual seemed considerably struck with Thorndale's bid. He had listened very carelessly so far to the pool-selling, for Mr. Mattocks had deemed Seth's chance fairly out from his lack of a jockey. The public also were under that impression, but many of them recognised that it was the owner of George Owen who had made this bold bid for third choice. Jumping at conclusions, they made the competition this time keen, and the call was finally knocked down for one hundred and ninety dollars, though not to Seth--the buyer however naming George Owen.

The Doctor continued his operations till there remained but one of the six entries unsold. "Six hundred and ten dollars in the pool and Charlestown still left. Only five dollars bid for Charlestown. Did any one ever hear the likes of that? Faith! I don't see why I wouldn't

be having a little chicken pie as well as the rest of ye. I'll give ten meeself."

"Twelve," said a voice.

"Arrah, Misther Hudson, ye'll niver let me alone with a good thing," and so after a little more chaff the hammer fell upon the last horse. The total amount of the pool was called out. Six hundred and twenty-two dollars. And then the Doctor starting another, immediately commenced selling first choice, &c., all over again.

Thorndale and Fortie watched the sale of one or two more pools. A reaction had evidently set in regarding George Owen, who was now freely chosen, although his owner made no further attempt to buy him. Mr. Mattocks had evidently, as Seth said, been woke up, and watched the competition with an interest that contrasted strongly with his previous listless indifference.

"Come away," said Thorndale, "we've had enough of this and we want to be up early to-morrow, so that you and

George Owen may make acquaintance."

"Who is Sol Mattocks?" inquired Fortie, as they strolled homeward in the glorious moonlight of an American August.

"A prominent man on our turf. Keeps a faro and roulette establishment at Washington when he's at home. Reckon you've a few of the same sort in the old country, only not living under free institutions, you are kinder obligated to keep your faro banks pretty dark. Our enlightened republic allows its citizens to go to the devil in their own way. Guess it don't make a deal of difference. But here we are. Good night; and expect to hear my knuckles against your door pretty soon after sun-rise."

Note.—Underwood, the originator of this pool system of betting, is no fictitious character. He deducts five per cent. for his trouble, and as in the large race meetings of the West, he sometimes sells twenty or thirty thousand dollars' worth of pools, makes a very good livelihood by it; his per centage on such weeks amounting to two or three hundred pounds.

CHAPTER VIII.

SARATOGA RACES.

THE day big with the fate of Fortie and George Owen has dawned. A blazing hot August morning, with the fierce American sun shining brightly. Saratoga is alive betimes. Idlers and water-drinkers, the votaries of health, and the votaries of pleasure, are all down and about by nine o'clock. The fashionable watering-place keeps early hours; they do in fact all over the States. Racing begins here at half-past eleven, is done with and the public back to dinner by four. People are lounging in the piazzas, making horrible faces over "the waters," taking their baths, getting what is denominated "fixed up" at the barber's,

or resorting to some other means of procuring an appetite for breakfast. Folks, especially the men, seem to make their toilette by instalments all about the town at Saratoga, going from their hotel to the baths, and proceeding thence by easy stages to the barber's.

A curious and inexplicable phenomenon current there this year, is in full blast, early as it is. This consists of a break drawn by four horses, and occupied by a strong brass band. On the panels of the break, in large gilt letters, are inscribed "Eastwood's Business," though what that may mean nobody seems to be aware. They drive about continually, stopping at intervals to play all sorts of fashionable dance music. That it was an ingenious form of advertizing, nobody doubts, but still no one seems disposed to ascertain who Eastwood may be, or what his business. For all that, "Eastwood's Business" at present pervades Saratoga, and it is impossible to escape from it for more

than two or three hours at a time.

Fortie Merrington has had few moments of unalloyed satisfaction since he commenced life in America. One of those rare occasions he is enjoying this morning. He is in his own bed-room, and occupied in cleaning his boots. I may observe parenthetically, that boot cleaning is one of the unknown sciences throughout the great Republic. Of course they smear, but *bonâ fide* cleaning they comprehend not. Amongst his English kit, had by some accident been involved a pair of top boots, and a couple of pair of leathers.

The glee with which Fortie had drawn these from his stores, can only be appreciated by him who has ridden a steeplechase in trousers. Their purification, except at his own hands, he knew was hopeless, and he had dedicated the last hour to them and their companion leathers. He now pauses and contemplates the result of his labours with considerable ex-

ultation. He has ridden George Owen a couple of gallops with great satisfaction, both to himself and Thorndale, and ascertained one rather essential point, where the hurdles are stiff, to wit, that he is a grand jumper ; and in America, hurdles are built up till they are in fact well nigh solid timber.

Fortie descends, and enters the dining-room in high spirits.

“Here you are,” cried Seth, who with his wife, and three or four friends, was breakfasting at one of the tables. “Come along, sir, there’s nothing equals beginning the day on a good foundation.”

“Good morning, Mr. Merrington,” said Zare, as he dropped into a seat beside her. “I’m coming up to see your triumph. Mind, you must win, I can’t bear being beaten.”

“I hope you will not have to ; but all racing, as your husband can testify, has a good deal of luck in it. If it is any satisfaction to you, I feel, though I don’t

know why, great confidence in my star to-day. You will laugh perhaps, but I have an impression that I shall not only win, but the tide of my life will turn from this hurdle-race."

"Are you a believer in presentiments?" inquired Mrs. Thorndale.

"Yesterday, I should have said not. Now it seems as if my whole life were to turn upon this race, and that I shall be successful."

"Time to start," interrupted Seth; "our carriage is ready, Zare, if you are," and a few minutes more saw the party on their way to the course, in company with many another barouche or landau. Eastwood's Business is there naturally. Eastwood's Business is everywhere. Just now, perhaps, a little in difficulties. Eastwood's Business had considered the centre of the betting lawn the most appropriate spot from which to discourse soft music between the races, and is already pouring forth "The Power

of Love" vales in jubilant strains. But the stewards of the meeting, incited probably by the owners of fractious horses, decide that Eastwood's Business must be mute, whereupon that mysterious body retire in dudgeon from the arena.

Showing their Grand Stand tickets, consisting of about a foot of rose-coloured ribbon, stamped in black letters,

Saratoga Course. August Meeting, 186—.

STAND AND QUARTER STRETCH,

Mrs. Thorndale and the ladies of the party are first escorted to their places in front of the Grand Stand.

"*Au revoir*, Mr. Merrington," said Zare. "Your confidence has infected me. Come back after the race to receive my congratulations. Let me see you at all events, even if we have merely to condole with each other on the result."

"Certainly," replied Fortie, and he and Seth made their way to the Lawn.

Perched in a sort of rostrum just under the Stand, Dr. Underwood is busily pursuing his vocation. "Three seventy in the pool, Patti and Verbena sold; how much for Seven Oaks," in his racy brogue, indicate that speculation is rife about the flat race with which the proceedings open. Several of the turf notabilities are lounging round his pulpit. Mark that negro with a pair of white linen trousers thrust into buckets, it would be heresy to call them boots, in dirty red jacket, greasy black velvet cap, and his left spur tied on with a piece of string; that's "old Abe," the Aldcroft or Wells of the Southern States, rider of many a heavily backed winner over the Lexington track. That little, slight, sandy-haired man is Gilpatrick, also one of their leading artistes. He is rather better got up than his black rival; but like him rejoices in linen trousers thrust into boots. Mr. Mattocks, too, is there, watching the pool-selling with the eye of a gled, and chewing ra-

ther than smoking the cigar, that he rolls between his thick sensuous lips.

But the preliminary items are got through. The hurdles put up, and the event of the day is about to take place. "All off the quarter stretch, gentlemen, except owners and those connected with the horses," thunders the clerk of the course; a gladiator who has made his name in this world's history. For is he not the conqueror of Heenan, who fought that mighty international battle with Sayers on Farnborough Heath. A story classic in England's annals, about which the *Times* published an epic, and which scandal contends bishops and privy councillors went to see. A man of mark, I ween, had he not even achieved a seat in Congress afterwards. The Gully of the American world.

The bell rings in the judge's stand for saddling, and the privileged cluster on the course to inspect the competitors. George Owen lathers a good deal, and is

pronounced by the cognoscenti, rather big. Wild Rose and Reserve are evidently over-trained. Old Charlestown his age is unknown, and the oldest turfite present cannot recollect his beginning, looks wonderfully well, and seems skittish as a colt, still, such a sexaginarian can have no chance. "Ha! here comes the winner," murmur the lookers on, as Mr. Mattocks' Zigzag comes sweeping down the course. Drawn rather fine, as regards his condition, still one can see with half an eye, that he is of a superior class to the other competitors. Those deep muscular thighs, and well let down hocks are bound to be served. If he can but jump they may well make him first favourite. But a thing that attracts almost as much attention as the horses, is Fortie Merrington's get up. Neither old Abe or Gilpatrick condescend to risk their valuable necks in hurdle races, but the jockeys that do, are not one whit more carefully attired. Fortie's correct boots

and breeches, light racing spurs, neat sky blue jacket with white sleeves and cap to match (the work these last of Mrs. Thorndale and her friends) are a novelty that the American racing world stare at with much admiration.

Seth rushes up the stand to a place next his wife, as the horses cluster round the starting post just opposite. Clang goes the bell as the flag falls, and they are away. Zigzag and Reserve lead slightly over the first hurdle, at which George Owen seems half inclined to swerve, till admonished by a touch of Fortie's off spur, which takes him safe over. Zigzag now goes to the front and leads them at a strong pace, waited on by old Charlestown, and as they clear the fourth hurdle, which brings them past the stand again, a tremendous scene of tailing is exhibited. Up the far side of the course the gap opens wider and wider. Nothing can live with Zigzag, who is jumping beautifully, except the despised

but evergreen Charlestown. Fortie struggles along next, though a good way behind, and then come the Wild Rose and Reserve at wide intervals. The race apparently lies between the leading pair.

“We’re beat, Zare—beat all to pieces by the eternal,” said Seth, after a steady stare through his glasses. “Merrington’s riding his horse now nearly half a mile from home. George Owen is out-paced, and has been all the way.”

Down they come to the last hurdle, Zigzag leading, though Charlestown sticks to him like a leech, but it is evident that the favourite can come away when he likes.

“Zigzag’s down, by the living jingo!” suddenly shrieked Seth, “and there goes Charlestown over him. George Owen wins! George Owen wins!”

A fierce dig of the spurs sends George Owen safe over that last fatal hurdle, and Fortie lifts in his horse dead beat,

a couple of lengths in advance of Charlestown, whose rider had remounted and finished without a bridle, that necessary adjunct having been pulled over the horse's head in the fall.

"Oh, Seth, we've won after all!" cried Zare, clapping her little hands with excitement. "How beautifully Mr. Merriington rode."

"He did, he rode with great patience and judgment; but it's an everlasting slice of luck his winning. Wouldn't have been in it if it hadn't been for the smash at the last hurdle. I'm off! I wouldn't miss having a look at Old Sol Mattocks just now for a thousand dollars," and Seth dashed down the stairs.

Quite an ovation met Fortie as he re-entered the lawn; Thorndale leading his horse. The clapping of hands in the stand, mostly tenanted by ladies, was demonstrative. Our fair American cousins, on these occasions, render the

same tribute to the successful horseman they would to the successful actor or singer. Moreover, Fortie's good looks and neat costume, which contrasted so favourably with his competitors, went far to evoke the ladies' enthusiasm at his success. Women are never blind on these points, and many, previous to the start, had hoped fortune might favour him, for no other reason. Men, he had never seen before, insisted on shaking hands with him and congratulating him on his excellent riding. It is not often they see a hurdle race in the States, while steeple-chasing is unknown. He was the hero of the hour, and it was some little time before he could escape and make his way to Mrs. Thorndale.

"Most sincere, though interested congratulations," said Zare, as she welcomed him. "We quite thought you were beaten."

"And so I was," replied Fortie. "Nothing but luck enabled me to win."

Do you recollect what I told you, Mrs. Thorndale? I feel implicit faith in my presentiment now, and am assured that life is about to be made smooth to me from this out. I even dare to hope again on a subject which I have hitherto deemed hopeless."

"And that is?" inquired Zare.

"My secret;" replied Fortie, laughing.

"Ah, you forget what I told you. You men never can keep a secret from us that we want to know. I'm curious about your's, and will tell it you before very long."

"Now, Zare," interrupted Thorndale, "the carriage is here, and we had better be off. No use waiting for the last race. Guess I've seen old Sol; he looked as if something had disagreed with him, particular when I told him Zigzag was a sweet horse anywhere except over hurdles."

What a pleasant dinner that was at the Congress Hall that afternoon. How they chatted and laughed over the

events of the day. "You're a distinguished citizen now, Merrington. Yes, sir," continued Seth, "as we got into the carriage, I heard one little boy point you out to his companion as 'him who rode the hurdle.'"

"Yes," laughed Zare, "and you know woman's weakness for the hero of the hour. So remember I hold you my cavalier round the ball-rooms to-night. Time now, I suppose, to let you go and smoke; but don't fail in your allegiance later on."

"*Semper paratus*, that is always at your service, Mrs. Thorndale," said Fortie, as they rose, and Zare led the way to the ladies' drawing-room.

"Guess we'll have a smoke out in the piazza," and Seth, stepping out of the window, proceeded to make himself comfortable.

"You must have felt pretty considerable small potatoes about half-a-mile from home to-day," he observed after a bit, when their cigars were well under way.

“Just tell us what you thought of the race at that time.”

“I will,” said Fortie, “and you are indebted to a presentiment for my winning. As I told Mrs. Thorndale before I started, I had an instinctive feeling that I should win, and that the history of my life turned upon my doing so. George Owen was so thoroughly out-paced at that time, that as you, of course, saw, I had to begin riding him, and our chance looked so utterly hopeless, that but for that feeling, I should have stopped him then and there, as to continue seemed only wantonly distressing a good horse. But you had told me he was thoroughly game, and impelled by this idea, I thought no, I’ll not give up till I’ve seen the leaders safe over the last hurdle. You know the rest. Lucky I didn’t, very.”

“Reckon I’ll tell that little anecdote to old Sol first time I have a chance. Calculate it would fetch him some. How fond he’d be of you and your presentiments.”

Saratoga differs so very much from any of our English watering places, that one may be pardoned for alluding to a few of its peculiarities. I have described it as almost a road lined by gigantic hotels. To every one of these great caravanserais is attached a band and a ball-room, and dancing goes on nearly every night at them all. As they lie close together, it is of course easy in the glorious nights of an American summer to flit from one to the other. It is but slipping across the road, or a little way down the street, almost light as day beneath the big red August moon. Consequently, the revellers in that fashionable watering place rove from ball-room to ball-room as whim or fancy dictate. You may walk through your quadrille at "Congress Hall," step over and join in the next valse at "the American," plunge into a polka-mazurka at "the Clarendon," have a tremendous galop at "The United States," and be back again at your own

hotel, whatever it may be, in time for the Lancers. Such was the pleasant round that Mrs. Thorndale meditated this evening. She was fond of dancing, as all Americans are. Her husband's triumph had put her in great spirits. She wanted to receive the ovation due to success, and parade the hero of the hour. As she said herself, a weakness women are especially prone to.

After more than two years of his lonely life, it was very sweet to Fortie to find himself made much of and petted by a woman, handsome as Zare. Besides, she was the leader of a gay and fashionable party who adhered closely to her standard. Mrs. Thorndale was a person of some consequence in New York society, and had found many of her following at Saratoga Springs. The ladies, like their leader, made much of Fortie, and he tasted the intoxication for the first time in his life of believing himself a celebrity. It has turned men's heads

late in life, long after experience should have taught them that unless solid recognition follow quickly, their greatest achievements are but a nine days' wonder. How many of these meteors does each year relegate to obscurity. Not a few are only recognised, when deaf to our praise or censure we hang garlands on their tombstones. All England and America rushed to see the Colleen Bawn; but Gerald Griffin who wrote the Collegians, from which the play was taken, died unnoticed, while his tragedy of Gisippus achieved a great success when the pulses of the author were stilled by death. As he himself sang,

" All feverish and glowing,
I rushed up the rugged path leading to fame.
I snatched at my laurels while still they were growing;
And won for my guerdon *the half of a name.*"

Not much wonder, in his twenty-fifth year, that Fortie succumbs quickly to the subtle flattery. It would be good for him that he should return to New

York, his chain and his collar quickly, or the steady discipline of the last two years or so may be upset.

Meanwhile he follows in Mrs. Thorn-dale's train, and does his full share of talking, flirting and dancing. He has just conducted Zare to a seat at the conclusion of a valse at the American Hotel, when a nice-looking girl crosses the room, and shaking hands with Mrs. Thorndale, expresses her gratification at seeing her.

"I had no idea you were here, Jessie. Why when did you come?"

"Only this afternoon. Mr. Merrington, I must shake hands and congratulate you on your victory, although, you must own, you don't deserve it from me—after all the promises you made to come and see us, you have never even left a card at our door."

Fortie's assurance rather failed him, for he recognised the pretty companion of his outward voyage, and he mumbled

a rather unsatisfactory and stumbling apology, based upon multitudinous business and a distrust of general invitations.

“He didn’t know us, did he, Mrs. Thorndale?” cried the girl triumphantly. “I wonder whether he does yet. We don’t give those conventional invitations you are so fond of in the old country. When we ask you to come and see us we mean it.”

“Ah!” laughed Zare, as the band rang out the *Satanella* vales. “Your case is very weak, Mr. Merrington; if she will take pity on you, you had better dance this with her, and try to make your peace. Give him a chance to apologize, Jessie.”

Of course, there was no option left Fortie but to immediately follow Mrs. Thorndale’s directions. He was apparently pretty successful in obtaining forgiveness for his shortcomings; so much so, that Zare, when he rejoined her, inquired a

little sharply where he had known Jessie Sheldon.

Fortie's explanation was satisfactory, and after dispatching a cavalier in search of her husband, Mrs. Thorndale announced her intention of going home.

"No use going to bed yet, Merrington," observed Seth, after they had said good night to the ladies. "Light another weed, and we'll stroll down and get some supper at Morrissey's.

The masculine world would scarcely deem their day finished without dropping in at this establishment. It answers the purpose of a club, though it is in reality—well, our English expression is coarse—permit me to say a *salon de jeu*. It was a small, well-lit, well-furnished house, the whole of which seemed thrown open to visitors. Here was a room dedicated to faro and roulette, opening into another in which *écarté* and railroad whist seemed the principal diversions. Well-trained black servants glided continually about,

profferring cigars and cooling drinks of every description. Thorndale paused for a few moments to introduce Fortie to the proprietor, who might have sat for a picture of Dirk Hatteraick. His broad shoulders, dark, swarthy countenance, and seemingly low, though powerful frame, forcibly recalling Scott's truculent hero to one's memory. The great breadth of shoulder detracted from the ex-gladiator's real height, and made him look shorter than he really was. He welcomed them cordially, led the way to the supper-room, ordered the attendants to produce more devilled woodcocks, and open another bottle of champagne; then, with an injunction to ask for anything else they wanted, he left them to "commit the amiable" elsewhere.

Next Fortie was seated a little Frenchman, who was in ecstasies at the *cuisine*. "C'est bon n'est-ce pas?" he observed. "By Gar, in dis dog's-hole of a place dey *mangent* only. Dey dine nevare, God

dam. Poof! such cooking, *dîner de chien*. Is it not so, Monsieur? Waitare. You give breakfast here?"

"Yes, sir; any time after ten."

"*Bon!* and what time zou dine?"

Fortie was much tickled at the Frenchman's contemplated arrangements, he evidently meditated boarding himself there for the remainder of his sojourn in Saratoga.

"Now," said Seth, "if you've finished, light another cigar, and let's go down and have a look at the inner sanctuary."

"What do you mean?" inquired Fortie.

"In the rooms we have come through, the play is moderate; but down stairs they pile it on pretty tall. Reckon 'inner sanctuary' was hardly the correct term, but come and see;" and Seth led the way down stairs and over a low bridge, which apparently spanned a garden at the back of the house into a sort of pavilion.

No need to tell anyone who had passed

his novitiate, that the play was deep in that octagon room. The quiet, broken only by some brief order to the attentive waiters, contrasted strongly with the murmur of conversation and decorous laughter that had run through the upper rooms. At one side a knot were congregated round a roulette table, absorbed in the revolutions of the continually whirling ball. At the other, seated round an oval table were some ten or a dozen men absorbed in the national game of poker (a species of brag), piles of notes lay on the table between them. Several of the players had thrown off their coats, and now wooed fortune in the easy deshabelle of shirt-sleeves—men, most of them addicted to satin waistcoats, heavy gold chains, diamond rings and studs. What our cousins denominate “sportsmen” these; but with a very different signification to that which we attribute to the word. With them it is constantly used to designate professional gamblers.

A slight fair-haired man wearing none of those accessories, and who had not dispensed with his coat, showed his hand triumphantly as Fortie entered, and proceeded to sweep up the pile of notes that laid in the centre of the table in consequence. His back was towards them as he did so ; but his figure gave Merrington a faint idea that it was some one he knew. Another minute, and he turned to speak to the man next him—one of the black-satin-waistcoated gold-chained fraternity, and then Fortie recognised Jim Halden.

He had never seen him since they had stood face to face, pistol in hand, on the cliff above the old castle that morning at Dieppe. Months ago, Furnival, in one of the occasional letters he still wrote, had mentioned his old adversary's disappearance from the London world, and that a heavy unsettled Derby book had been the proximate cause thereof. But Fortie had thought little about it either

at the time or since. He stood in the background watching the play for some little time, and soon convinced himself that Halden was confederate or in partnership with one or two of the professional gamblers engaged in the game.

"Time to go home," he muttered to Seth, and as they walked back to Congress Hall, Fortie thought to himself, "Yes, I made a terrible fiasco, and committed as much mad folly as it was possible to well concentrate into my first eighteen months of beginning the world; but, thank Heaven! I have got clear of all that, and trust now to escape the fate that probably awaits Jim Halden."

A bright sun and "Eastwood's Business" usher in another glorious day, and at breakfast Fortie announces his intention of returning to New York in the afternoon — a determination violently opposed by the Thorndales.

"It is simply impossible, Mr. Merrington!" exclaimed Zare. "I don't

wish to be *exigeante* in the least. It would be very ungrateful after all you have done for us; but to-night, Seth gives his dinner at the Lake in celebration of yesterday's victory—you must stop for that. How can we dine without our hero?"

"Never do at all, sir. Can't dine without my jockey being there. They'd say nasty things of me all over the place—they'd point at me and say, 'the mean cuss, sir, he went out and liquored and fed at the Lake Tavern, and never even asked the man who won the race for him to join him.' One more night won't make any difference."

So Fortie yielded, and postponed his departure.

Some four or five miles from Saratoga is a pretty little basin of water, surrounded by well wooded hills. A passable lake enough in countries where things are not on the stupendous size they are in America. But there the lakes are seas—

the rivers channels, and even the hotels, small country towns. However, art has done all she can to supply the deficiencies of nature. Numberless miniature pleasure craft move about its surface, while the fussiest and most comical of steamers snorts, puffs and shrieks about its banks in a manner that is calculated, as far as possible, to produce the effect of a perfect steam fleet. But at the edge of this little lake stands an hotel much celebrated for its cookery. The art of frying potatoes is reduced there to a science; they come up in shavings as if produced by the work of a spoke-shave. There are little ponds there in which you see the lake trout you are destined to eat swimming about, and the attendants hand you capacious landing nets with which to take them out for yourself. Selecting your own fish is quite part of the play at a Lake Tavern dinner. It does duty as a species of Greenwich to the gay watering-place, and a room to dine in is often a matter of as much diffi-

culty to accomplish as at "The Ship," unless previously bespoke.

Round these little ponds over-shadowed by ash, maple, and elm tree, are gathered Thorndale's party, consisting of some dozen or fourteen; the sexes are pretty equally divided, and peals of laughter attest that there may be much diversion afforded by taking a big trout with a landing-net. Zare looks superbly handsome in a rich silk dress, Spanish hat and feathers, with a black lace shawl trailing from her shoulders. She smiles as Miss Sheldon, who has succeeded in entrapping a mighty fish into her net, struggles laughingly to lift him ashore, and appeals vehemently to Fortie to help her; but her brows contract slightly, on seeing that he still lingers by that young lady's side after the difficulty had been successfully surmounted.

They turn towards the house, and as they do so, the "Power of Love" valse comes mellowed across the water. Yes,

there they are. In the biggest sailing boat procurable, are seated "Eastwood's Business" hard at it. It seems to be as essential as the mineral springs; it pervades the whole place, perhaps the waters should be taken to soft music; but then, why do not the doctors say so.

Very merry is that dinner; the broiled trout are delicious, the champagne is well iced, and the fried potatoes excellent, they place them before you in endless quantities, and you eat them with everything. Of course the health of the winner of the hurdle race is proposed, and Fortie has to pause in the midst of a promising flirtation with Jessie Sheldon to acknowledge the compliment. He does it well, and winds up his speech by craving a bumper to the health of the fair lady whose colours he had the honour to wear upon that occasion. "Mrs. Thorndale's health, and may her sky-blue and white never be beaten," was a stirring toast with which to finish.

“Remember, Mr. Merrington, you have solemnly promised to come and see us, when we get back to New York, and you will this time, won’t you?” said Jessie Sheldon, as they lounged in the piazza waiting for the carriages.

“Yes, indeed,” replied Fortie, “I think I shall abandon the recluse life I have led the last two years.”

“Of course you will,” said a voice behind them. “Woe betide you, if you are not one of my earliest visitors on my return. I am very easily offended on that score, Mr. Merrington, and you have no idea how far the effects of my displeasure in New York extend,” laughed Zare.

And then they drove home in the glorious moonlight. Fortie made his adieux before retiring, and at an early hour the next morning was on his way back.

CHAPTER IX.

NEW RELATIONS

[T was perhaps just as well for Fortie that he saw no more of his new friends for some weeks. The Thorn- dales, Sheldons, &c., continued the regular round that the New York world pursues in the summer months. They stayed on a little while at Saratoga, and then proceeded to Newport for the sea-bathing. Newport is Saratoga over again, with that addition. The same big hotels, nightly balls, flirtations, picnic parties, with another institution of the Morrissey stamp to wind up at. This gave Fortie time to settle down again to the line he had marked out for himself. It seemed monotonous at first,

falling back once more into the old solitary life. To the man who has once been fond of, and somewhat petted in society, the entire resignation thereof always comes hard at first ; but he never perhaps feels the collar gall so much, as when after a brief glimpse of the old seductive life of yore, he has to fall back again upon his enforced abstinence. He misses so the soft talk and laughter of the women, the very rustle of their dresses, the general converse of the dinner table, the careless chaff over the evening cigar. The solitary pipe over, his book weighs heavy on his soul, especially when he has numbered barely twenty-four summers, and not yet attained to the philosophical view "that all is vanity." Later in life, sorrow, trial and disappointment have taught their lesson, and we are well satisfied that our evening may be so tranquilly passed. Woman has mostly by that time read us a smart lesson regarding her angelic qualities. Some ascetics,

indeed, go the length of regarding her much as De Quincey tells us the ancient Egyptians did the crocodile, "as a thing sometimes to worship, but always to run away from." In the club smoking-rooms you will find this opinion rather prevalent in these times.

And Fortie had been made a good deal of these few days at Saratoga. A good-looking young fellow and the hero of the hour, it was only natural that the women had rather combined to spoil him. Mrs. Thorndale was not only about the handsomest woman there, but also a lady of mark in the fashionable world to boot, and she had certainly made much of him during his stay. One thing had puzzled Fortie much, and that was that Zare had been a little sharp upon him concerning his flirtation with Jessie Sheldon. She had said never a word, but the veriest tyro knows that a woman can say a good deal without using her tongue. Indeed, what her eyes and eyebrows tell, should

be quite sufficient for any male creature rash enough to pretend to understand the somewhat complex workings of her mind. The fair sex are apt pupils of Talleyrands, and thoroughly appreciate the aphorism "that language was given us to conceal our thoughts." There is great doubt, by the way, to whom that famous *mot* should be properly attributed; but Talleyrand seems to have the credit of it more generally.

But the reason that had made Fortie so anxious to get away from Saratoga he had breathed to no mortal soul. In his visit to Morrissey's, he had awoke to the fact that the thirst for gaming yet lived in him. It was scotched, not killed. He had moralized that night over what was like to be the finish of Halden's career; but in his room he recognized the fact that throw him but in the way of it for a few nights, and he could no more keep his hand from card or dice box than of old. Fortie, as Seth had said, had some bone in his

character. But he was not vain glorious, and preferred flight to combatting his enemy. A mode of repulsion that it would be better for many of us if we more often put in practice.

About the end of September he received a note from Jessie Sheldon, saying they had returned from Newport, and asking him in her father's name to dine there on the following Thursday. Miss Sheldon had been much disposed to embark in a flirtation with Fortie on board the Cunard steamship; but sore at heart then, from Katie's rejection, ruined in prospects, and feeling, after man's wont in such case, at war with the world, he had given her but little encouragement. In their brief meeting at Saratoga, she had certainly no cause to complain; Fortie, at the Lake Hotel, having been most devoted during the evening. From that dinner party he glided gradually into society, to which the return of Mrs. Thorndale, some few days later, still

further contributed. Pleasant houses both were Seth's and the Sheldons, and Fortie soon found himself a welcome guest at either.

"Dine with us to-morrow, Mr. Merington," said Zare, as after paying a lounging afternoon visit he rose to depart. "Quite a small party, you know; but Seth's mother honours us, and she is a dear old lady. Did I ever tell you she was English by the way, and very insular in her ideas and prejudices? She is, and, moreover, her husband was also. Seth is only American by birth, not by lineage. Still, I am very fond of her, and we get on capitally, which is as well; for Mrs. Thorndale the elder can deal very bitter words around when she pleases, or to speak more correctly when she's displeased."

"I shall be very glad," replied Fortie. "But you astonish me; I had no idea that Thorndale was of English descent."

"It is the case, nevertheless," said

Zare, laughing, "and you might have guessed it from his being so very American. Pure children of the soil, like myself, don't think it necessary to protest so loudly, but our naturalized brothers and sisters can never trumpet too vehemently the fact of their citizenship. They suffer from Yankeephobia."

Mrs. Thorndale was perfectly right on this point in her husband's character. Fond though he was of his mother, deeply as he respected and bore with her English prejudices, which some five-and-thirty years residence in America had failed to eradicate, Seth had thoroughly identified himself with the land of his birth. He even went so far as to exaggerate in his speech, for the Americanisms he at times freely introduced, if they came easy, were hardly natural to him. He was a man of liberal ideas and tolerant spirit, but apt to be grandiloquent when touching on the glories, past and present, of the United States. It is a common trait in

his countrymen, and it is this implicit belief in themselves that has gone far to make them the mighty nation they are. They hold a continuous Œcumenical Council of their polyglot population, and the dogma of the infallibility of "the Stars and Stripes" is both insisted on and believed.

On Fortie's making his appearance next evening in Mrs. Thorndale's drawing-room, she, immediately they had exchanged greetings, took him across the room to where sat an old lady enthroned on a sofa—a stately old lady, habited in black silk, with soft white hair, dark eyes, and but slightly grizzled eye-brows; a bright intelligent face, a little stern in its expression, to which the clear, thin, well-cut lips, perhaps, rather contributed.

"Let me introduce Mr. Merrington, mother," said Zare. "He is a compatriot of yours, which I hope will induce you to welcome him to start with; afterwards, you will learn, I think, as we

have done, to like him for himself."

"So you're an Englishman, sir," observed the old lady, as she bowed. "It is not very often I meet one now-a-days. Not but what there are many who visit New York; but old women like me, Mr. Merrington, don't go about very much."

"I dare say you don't care so much about it," replied Fortie, smiling. "It is a taste that soon wears off. I'm not very old, but I have already learnt that much."

"Pooh—nonsense; you? Why, at your age, you should feel unhappy if you're not out somewhere every night of your life. The mercury of youth still runs in your veins. You ought to be as restless as my son there, who trenches hard upon perpetual motion. What part of England do you come from?"

"I can hardly say, for I was born abroad. If I can lay claim to any county, it is Lincolnshire, where my mother's people belong."

"Lincolnshire," said the old lady, musingly. "Do you know that county well, Mr. Merrington?"

"Indifferently, only one part of it well. I had an uncle who brought me up, for my parents died before I could recollect them. St. Helens was the name of his place. If you know the county, you may have heard of it."

"St. Helens! Good heavens, yes! Do you mean Sir Giles De Driby's place?"

"Exactly. I lived there a good deal till we quarrelled."

"And how—how were you his nephew?"

"Well," laughed Fortie, "because my father married his sister. I don't well see how else it could have happened, eh, Mrs. Thorndale?"

"No, of course not," and the old lady relapsed into silence.

All this time, Fortie had been haunted with a vague, undefined feeling of talking to somebody he had met previously. Of course it was absurd, but he could not

get over the idea that he had seen Mrs. Thorndale before on some occasion.

“Dont think me rude, Mr. Merrington,” she inquired at length, “but I should like to know your mother’s name.”

“Jessie,” he replied, simply.

“You will be surprised, doubtless, when I tell you, but it is nevertheless true, that I am your aunt. I don’t suppose you ever heard of Sara De Driby, who ran away with her lover, and, as the family were good enough to add, disgraced herself by so doing. I have my own opinion about that; but all the same I am her,” said Mrs. Thorndale, defiantly.

Fortie was staggered, he certainly never had heard his Aunt Sara alluded to. It was very natural. It had all taken place before he was born, and after old Sir Ralph, his grandfather, had punctiliously cursed her for making such a *mésalliance*, her name had never been mentioned by the family.

“I don’t suppose,” continued Mrs. Thorndale, after a short pause, “you ever would hear of me. After my elopement, my father made Lincolnshire no place for me to live in, and it was principally by my advice that my husband came to America. You see,” she said softly, “though I loved him dearly, I had not courage enough to live there disowned by my own people, and I knew he could never force his way to their level. It was best to go far away. I thought so then, I think so still; and to think of meeting poor dear Jessie’s child at last. I never could hear who she married. What is your Christian name?”

“Fortescue; commonly called Fortie, aunt.”

“So you intend to acknowledge me,” said Mrs. Thorndale, as a tear twinkled in her dark eyes. Many had welled there in bygone days on account of that harsh severance from her kin, that her relentless father had so sternly decreed. “Go and

send Seth to me first, and then tell Zare all about it."

Fortie obeyed her hest quickly, and Zare listened to his tale with undisguised astonishment.

"Then you are Seth's cousin," she exclaimed, "and therefore my relation by marriage, Mr. Merrington; I congratulate you on the attainment of kith to a family that includes my fair self."

"The most sparkling gem in the family circlet. Is not that poetical and sweet, Mrs. Thorndale?"

"Very, and shows that you are already awake to the dignity thus thrust upon you. Do you know that I made a wild guess at your history at Saratoga, that is a part of it; and that I have subsequently ascertained no prophetess ever was—was—what do you call it, righter. Not quite the word, but it will do—"

"Continue fair sybil, expound," said Fortie, as Zare paused.

"No, not to-night. Bear in mind, I

have an insight into your life you wot not of."

Seth here interrupted their conversation. "Waal, Merrington, I'm real glad of what the old lady tells me. Took kindly to you from the first, I did, and so did the wife; didn't you, Zare? It warms one up like, to find we're of the same blood. Can't like you, I guess, better much than I did before, but you belong to us now. And we cotton to cousins down east, Zare, don't we?"

"Yes. I don't come from down East myself, Fortie Merrington;" rejoined Mrs. Thorndale, laughing; "but I hold with them in that 'I cotton to cousins.' You get no more conventional titles here—henceforth, Seth, he must come as Fortie, 'him who rode the hurdle' or nothing—is it not so?"

"I accept the position with pleasure and gratitude, and now it is time I was off. So good-night, Mrs. Thorn—"

"Zare!" she interrupted, laughing.

“Have we not done away with the conventionalities? Pleasant dreams to you, Fortie, *amico mio*,” and she stretched out her hand.

It was in rather a bewildered state that Merrington found himself when he reached the street. He saw the likeness now. It was Sir Giles of whom his newly found aunt reminded him. This new relationship seemed very strange to him. He had heretofore been a man with so few family connexions. His father had been an only child, and of relations on that side he had but vaguely heard. When he had quarrelled with his uncle and Horace De Driby, he looked upon it he had severed himself from all such ties, and during the lonely life of the past two years—getting on three now, he had often thought what a solitary unit he was in the world. No one to mourn his death—no one to hail his triumphs—no one to sympathize with his reverses—nor to rejoice at his successes. To comprehend this isolation

thoroughly, you must have endured it. You must have felt that craving for sympathy, that hunger of the soul for some one to weep or be glad with it. A desolation of spirit sad to think upon, when the tendrils of affection find nothing to cling to. Yet, in this hard world of ours, it is the lot of many men and alas, many women. I pity the latter most—a woman must have some outlet for the affections, or she withers like a flower unsupplied with water. It embitters men—it kills women. Scoff, if you will, but if you study life you will find my words are true. Hearts do not break over love affairs, because there is action, flux and reflex, to give salt of the Dead Sea or otherwise, to life; but woman sometimes dies from want of an outlet for her affections. It is not given to them all to take it out (pardon the slang) in parrots, cats, or canaries.

CHAPTER X.

DEATH OF JIM HALDEN.

A CLEAR crisp night, the beginning of October. Musing over these new found relations, Fortie lit his cigar, and walked homewards. He was very pleased with the discovery. He knew them—liked them, it was much to have a tie of some kind. His destiny seemed cast now in this new country; what was there to induce his return to England? Katie! despite his flirtation with Jessie Sheldon he was true to her still. He loved her yet, loyally as ever; but she had severed all bond between them. She was nothing to him now—could never be again. And absorbed in these meditations, Fortie only returned to ordinary consciousness

to discover that he had lost his way.

He was pretty conversant with New York, but had taken a wrong turn in his abstraction, and now found himself in a part of the city of which he had no knowledge. It was by no means a bad part of the town, the houses were very decent, indeed more than that, good second class dwellings. The street was nearly deserted, but a rather brilliant fanlight attracted Fortie's attention. He walked towards it, a couple of policemen were lounging opposite, but before he could make any inquiries respecting his road from them, a little man sprang from the steps beneath the light upon which he had been sitting, and exclaimed.

"Come in, stranger! A liquor and a smoke's good to take on your way home always. You can leave the pasteboard alone, or not, as you like."

One of the policemen made a half attempt to cross the road, but ere he had advanced half-a-dozen paces, Fortie had

followed the speaker through the door into a well-lighted hall. Of course he knew what description of house he was entering, he was quite aware it was a gaming house; but he wanted a glass of brandy-and-water, he wanted another cigar, he knew that if he lost all he had about him he couldn't be much hurt, and to crown all, there was that devil-may-care feeling of seeing what would come of it. A feeling that has oftentimes been followed by "morrows of repentance," by lamentations, and the homilies of those who have had to find the monies necessitated by such impulsive weakness. Rejoice not in your morality all ye who have never bet or gambled; meekly give thanks that chance put you not in the way thereof. Fathers of families have succumbed to the allurements of Baden, and three score years of piety and virtue is no infallible security that a man may not have a fatuous fancy for the Derby. We are all so severe to those who succumb to the tempta-

tions it was never our lot to encounter.

Ascending the stairs, Fortie followed his guide to the first floor and entered.

The apartments consisted of double drawing-rooms with folding doors. In the outer was spread a supper-table, garnished with numerous decanters, round which some half dozen chairs were still scattered. This room was empty, but from the inner came the voices of men in angry altercation, interlarded with fierce oaths. Ere Fortie could see into this inner room, came a crash, a thud, a shriek. Savage maledictions, followed by the whip-like crack of a Derringer revolver. The sound of an upset table, the smashing of a lamp, two more pistol shots, mingled with shrieks and execrations, and a man sprang past Fortie, dashed through the room and down the stairs. Some half dozen men came tumbling over one another through the doorway, evidently more panic-stricken than in pursuit of the fugitive—while the railway

calls of the police rang sharp, shrill and incessant in the street. Fortie had jumped back clear of the rush, and now paused at the supper-table to await what might be next forthcoming.

He could hear voices in the street, and rightly guessed that the fugitives had fallen into the hands of the police. But that inner room was now shrouded in an ominous silence. A deadly stillness had succeeded to the fierce uproar of some two minutes ago. Fortie felt instinctively that death reigned there supreme. He snatched a candle from the supper-table and went to the door. In the centre of the room lay overturned a large table covered with green cloth; broken chairs, scattered playing cards, and the *débris* of a large glass chandelier were strewn around in confusion. Close by the doorway, on the floor, and supporting himself against the wall was a dark swarth man, from a heavy cut on whose brow the blood was streaming. Another cowered

in a corner. Under the window a man lay motionless. A fourth equally still was prone by the side of the capsized table.

But Fortie had little time to gaze upon the scene. Quick footsteps behind him, and he was in the grasp of a couple of police officers, with the rough intimation that he might consider himself in custody, and then the inspector proceeded to take stock. "Off with him to the hospital," he said to some of his myrmidons, designating the bleeding gentleman near the door with his finger. "Reckon he's been given fits, some; but I expect he'll mend. Everlasting scared this one," he continued, picking up the wizened, shivering little man who occupied the corner. "Take care of him, some of you. A gone coon, this cuss, I believe," he muttered, as he stooped over the prostrate form by the table.

"Nary a bit," replied the supposed corpse, as he sat up. "You see, it ain't quite the first free fight I've been in.

Flatten out and lie still is my maxim, whenever the shooting begins. Being trod upon without daring to do more than squirm, is dodrotted awkward, but being plugged through in two or three places by mistake or otherwise, is a darned sight more inconvenient. Prisoner, eh? Waal, I guess so. Been it before, and shall, perhaps, be it again. In the meantime, I should like a liquor."

"Dead this one, though, in earnest," said the inspector, as he raised the motionless figure by the window, and as he did so, Fortie recognised in the pale, set features, the face of Jim Halden.

Abiit ad plures, in the old Roman phrase, he had gone over to the majority. Shot in a gambling brawl, Halden's restless spirit had fled.

CHAPTER XI.

LIFE AT ST. HELENS.

THE leaves are beginning to fall at St. Helens. The grand old woodlands are arrayed in all the richness of their autumn tints, and the crack of the breech-loader is heard constantly across stubble and turnip field. Sir Horace has got a party at the Manor House. Grave decorous sportsmen, with a stake in the country, as the phrase goes. Very different from the madcap frolic crew that met there during the brief *régime* of Fortie Merrington. Solemn rubbers, evoking a display of bad whist that the Turf Club could hardly imagine their fellow-creatures capable of, succeed those gay charades, private theatricals, &c.

The smoking-room congregation is very limited, and though the talk may be instructive, it is decidedly prosy. Sir Horace, it may be remembered, is of liberal opinions, and is cultivating that party. They are apt to be rather too utilitarian in their views for purposes of conviviality. Their opponents rejoice in the possession of a series of well preserved anecdote, laid in with the port of preceding generations. Like the wine, they are perhaps a little too old, but a venerable story is to be preferred to a disquisition on the currency.

Sir Horace's life is by no means a bed of roses. His ambition, we know, was to make himself a great political fact in his county. The encumbered state of the property militated much against his views in this respect. I forget who just now was the venerable ancient that laid down that most fallacious dogma, that "money is the root of all evil." It is one of the first lessons preached to us

in childhood, to be immediately succeeded by a sermon on the duty of the acquisition of riches. Certain it is, that the lack of that necessary ingredient to felicity, rather than the possession, tends to crime, bitter wailing, and anguish.

But this is discursive. Sir Horace is entertaining at St. Helens, and Sir Horace can but admit that his party is dull. The necessary amount of partridges are being demolished, for if they do not walk quite so quick as the young ones, they can shoot pretty well as straight, can these elders of their generation. Moreover, abstinence from the smoking-room is all in favour of correctness of eye and nerve.

Mrs. De Driby is there in great force—patronizing the younger ladies, currying favour with the elder. Gushing over Tennyson and other modern authors to the gentlemen, protesting that she is all mind, and adores talent, while she practically attends keenly to her own

material comforts and interests, she is a bitter thorn in her son's side just now. She is quite as ambitious as he of being a leading person in the county. Mother and son are alike in this; they both scorn the idea of the petty suzerainty of their immediate neighbourhood. "To ride the whirlwind of a keyhole and direct the storm of a saucer," is in their eyes beneath contempt; they have higher aims than these.

Now Mrs. De Driby has a natural taste for ostentation and magnificence. She is not altogether *parvenue* in that feeling; it was born with her, and had her income sufficed, she would have assuredly indulged it ere this. It irritates her that Sir Horace will not entertain in the lordly way at St. Helens, that she deems befitting the occasion, and which she also believes to be the way to the end they have in view. Things are all very well, but why is there not a French cook? The conservatory is poorly furnished. Why

not have bouquets and flowers from Hardings? Fish should come from London, instead of trusting to the local celebrity. There are not servants enough by half, in her opinion. It is so foolish of Sir Horace, this false economy just now. St. Helens ought to be spoken of as the most perfect *ménage* in the county—the cooking, a thing to be tried at considerable personal sacrifice in other ways. The *chef* should be a star of the first magnitude in the gastronomic world, for though not very wise in her generation, Mrs. De Driby knew that the way to obtain, not men's hearts, but their suffrages, was through their stomachs; and in these days, when feelings are such very bad style, what would you have more?

Such were the opinions Mrs. De Driby never tired of promulgating for her son's benefit, and he usually answered her nothing. He had no idea of taking her into his confidence, and telling her how much the property was involved. Bitter

as the discovery had been, he had at once locked it in his own breast, and as far as he might, would fain keep it from the world. Hopeless that—it was known or suspected, in some degree. Is it not the duty of every one in a country neighbourhood to know all he can concerning his neighbours' affairs, and in default of actual knowledge thereon, to improvise? Verily, my reader, thy lot has been cast entirely in cities, if that much is not known to thee. Sir Horace understood his mother—not meaning to make her his confidante, it was better to let the flood of her garrulity run unchecked. The principle is sound, it is attended with less physical exertion than attempts to stem the tide give rise to; while those afflicted with the "*Labitur et labetur*," feel grateful to those who so patiently bear "the flow that still for ever flows on," and pronounce them in future persons of agreeable intelligence.

"My dear Horace," exclaims his lady

mother, "it really is all nonsense going on with Smithson. We must have a man from London. There's Mr. Boltron, he's not intellectual I know, he told me the other day he had never read anything of Tennyson's but 'the Northern Farmer;' but he does understand cutlets, and he sent one of her efforts away after one mouthful last night."

"Not hungry perhaps," rejoined the Baronet.

"Nonsense, men are always hungry when their dinner is good. It is only when the cooking is doubtful, that they ever pay decent attention to us. Sir Carnaby Clashington after putting up his glass to the *fondue*, contradicted me most deliciously about my theory as to what had become of the lost tribes of Israel. To be sure he never does agree with anyone," continued Mrs. De Driby meditatively.

The gentleman in question would have contradicted the almanack, differed on

the weather, or disputed any possible subject you might happen to broach. Still he was popular, for he showed no bitterness in his continual diversity of view. He was a gentle irritant to society, not a blister; and such are generally welcome, though they may not be thought so at first sight. They promote conversation, break up a succession of platitudes, and give salt to such talk as goes on around them.

Sir Horace bore these attacks as I have already said, silently; he would mutter in conclusion that he thought "things did well enough," and then fly. It was near upon three years now that he had been master of St. Helens, and though he had striven hard, he had done little more than put things in training towards some eventual extrication of the property from its involvement. True, he had done, what his predecessor never had, that is, lived within his actual income. Some of the more ruinous mortgages had been paid

off, and the money to do so raised upon easier terms; but he had effected little more than this as yet. Did that queer codocil in his uncle's will, whereby it was possible that another claim of five thousand pounds might accrue, ever cross his mind? Well, not often now. It had haunted him a good deal at first; but nothing had been heard of Fortie for so long, that he had ceased to think much about it. Phinny with his gaze, as of old, directed at some very distant object, had stringent orders to keep a sharp look out for Merrington, and put all the machinery that imprudently signed stamped paper can evoke in motion, should he discover his arrival in England.

Sir Horace still mistrusted Moseley, though the strictest investigation not only proved nothing against him, but even became a voucher for his integrity. Beyond that he was the holder of a small mortgage on St. Helens for monies advanced to the late Sir Giles, there was not a

shadow of suspicion that could be cast upon him, even that amounted to next to nothing; the fact that Sir Giles had borrowed some two or three thousand from his steward, was no impeachment of the latter's honesty.

More than three years have passed since Katie last set eyes on her lover. She wonders often whether she is destined to see him again. Since that last letter from Queenstown, she has never heard more of him than the meagre intelligence Furnival had given her in London. And she has ascertained through Lizzie Jerningham, that Fripley has had no news of him now for months. Sometimes she has thought of writing to him herself, she might have addressed a letter as she had made out Furnival did his, to the Post Office, New York. She so longed to tell him she knew now how she had wronged him, to beg his forgiveness and to say how she had loved him, even when she had written him that cruel letter. To confess the

tears it had cost her then and afterwards, and how bitterly she regretted her want of faith, to ask him if he could no longer love one who could never cease to love him, to at least say he forgave her. But then cropped up the thought of that fatal legacy. Her father, in the first instance, on the receipt of Fortie's letter had at once decided that it was written with the sinister design of marrying her for the sake of that five thousand pounds. Might not Fortie, and Kate blushed to the very roots of her hair at the bare thought, might not Fortie entertain a similar idea of her should she write to him now. Better never see him more than run the risk of such a misconstruction. That Fortie was still in ignorance of that codicil never occurred to either herself, or her father. They looked upon it, he must have lawyers of some kind in possession of an address that would reach him, and that they of course had communicated to him the contents of his uncle's will.

But Katie brooded sorely over this lost love of hers. In the moments of her most righteous indignation, when she had deemed Fortie untrue to her, it had been but scotched, not killed. Men, and women too, bury their loves often in this world. It would be hard upon them if they did not, so constantly as they are called upon to renounce such misplaced affection. The woman you adore jilts you ; the man you dote upon marries somebody else. Well, we get over it after a little, and have our revenge in after-life, when the ideal of those days has proved him or herself of a most prosaic, uninteresting and unintellectual clay, and chuckle to ourselves over the escape we had on that occasion. But action, the stir of life, are the great panaceas for these cases. When fortune has cast our lot in stagnant waters, we brood long over such mischances. Man, of course, is less susceptible to this than woman. There must be some jostling with the world on his part in the most secluded

of dwelling-places ; but a woman situated as Katie was, had little to do but to think and grieve over that lost love she had cast from her of her own accord. Society she had none. Bred a lady, yet not born one, she had hardly an associate at St. Helens. It were needless to say she never went to the Manor House in these days. She had nothing left her, but to muse over and nurse the passion she still entertained for Fortie.

Would she ever hear of him again ? The thought haunted her. No wonder living this morbid, unnatural life, her cheek grew pale and her nervous system out of gear. There was nothing radically wrong, but the springs of life seemed not broken, but rusted. She was wondrous fair to look upon, with her blue eyes, pale cheeks, yellow hair, and slight, *petite*, girlish figure. She might have been taken for the river naiad, as she wandered listlessly on its banks.

Birkett Moseley watched his daughter

keenly—watched her with loving eyes, and was far from blind to the change in her health. It was seldom he could coax her to the piano now to play those old Scotch songs he loved so well. She mostly pleaded, “I’m so tired, father.” She never touched it of her own accord. He had taken her to the sea, and was bitterly disappointed that that had not brought back the roses to her cheeks. Foolish and ignorant man. A flush upon his darling’s cheeks now in her present state of health, and her days are numbered. It is in precisely this stage that consumption’s chill fingers first clutch their victim. Katie trembled on the verge. The one thing that seemed to do her good, had been two short visits that Lizzie Jerningham had paid to St. Helens. Then, indeed, the piano had rang out all sorts of lively melody, and Birkett Moseley had sat like one entranced. To his previous estimation of actresses had succeeded awe. He had

deemed them but paint patches and bangles; now he looked upon them as goddesses.

This may sound rhodomontade; but picture to yourself a plain man like Birkett Moseley, of whose preconceived opinions regarding actresses we are aware; picture to yourself a man of that class receiving into his house a handsome girl who sang, played, laughed, chatted with him, petted his dearly loved daughter, and kept the whole cottage alive with the sunshine of her presence. Fancy a father whose whole affections were wrapped up in that daughter, seeing the light come once more to her eyes, and the smile to her lips at the voice of the charmer; then make some allowance for entire change of opinions, and you will see that I am not overstating the case. It is your convert ever, who is most violent concerning his new belief.

But though these flying visits had done Katie much good for the time, they had

been followed by a reaction which made her present weakness only still more apparent, and it was with anxiety in his eyes and bitterness in his heart that Moseley now gazed upon his daughter. Since, through Lizzie's testimony, he had done Fortie justice, it had rankled strangely in his heart that he whom he had liked from a boy, and in his own mind had always regarded as Sir Giles' successor, should be in exile, while Sir Horace, whom he had never regarded with much favour reigned at St. Helens. Then Birkett Moseley reflected that it was Fortie's attachment to his own daughter, and peremptory refusal to give up his engagement to her, that had struck his name out of his uncle's will; that it was Horace De Driby who had first carried the intelligence of that engagement to Sir Giles; and as he brooded over all these things, he waxed exceeding bitter with his employer, indulging in angry mutterings.

“ Well, my lass, I must be up to the

Church Close for a bit. I'll be home to dinner, mebbe, but ye'll not wait, mind. I'm thinking ye look sorter better this morning, Katie, eh?"

"Oh, I'm well enough, father," rejoined the girl, with a faint smile. "A wee bit weak, that's all. I don't suppose I shall get quite strong again till next spring. Come back to dinner if you can."

"Aye, aye, lass!" and Birkett Moseley took his departure.

Katie sat for some time, her pale cheek leaning on her hand, in which the blue veins were too apparent. She was thinking about herself. She had not been well now for some months. She wondered whether she should ever become strong again. Then she thought if she was never to recover, but to get gradually weaker and weaker, and so pass away. Girls did that sometimes, she knew. She mused over this with considerable satisfaction, as young people who are out of health,

and whose current of life has not run smooth, often do. They find a morbid pleasure in picturing their last moments, and the remorse that their death will occasion to their friends and relations, especially those who have contravened them. The fact is, that they have no real belief in the pictures their imagination conjures up. It is simply sepulchre building. Your *Château d'Espagne* is a mausoleum. As we grow older, imagination has less to say to our thoughts on these occasions,

“Gin I mun doy, I mun doy,”

said the hard old Northern farmer, but he didn't contemplate it with feelings of much satisfaction.

Katie continues making mental arrangements for her own funeral. “Yes,” she murmurs, “I can write to him then. He must believe me on my death bed, and can put no misconstruction on my letter,” and the girl commenced weaving a pa-

thetic farewell to her lover in her own mind.

It did not occur to Katie just now, that about four weeks more would see the expiration of the three years in which, by the terms of Sir Giles' will, she was obligated to marry Fortie, or forfeit her bequest. Yet so it was; and that would do away with the sole cause, she alleged to herself, for not writing to him.

A knock at the door, and Mr. Filander was shown into the apartment. Katie rose to welcome him.

"How d-d-d-do, Miss Moseley," stammered the Curate. "I'm so g-g-glad to see you looking better."

"Thanks, Mr. Filander. I am afraid though I have not made much improvement."

After the programme she had been mentally rehearsing, it could hardly be supposed that Katie was going to admit that.

"Dear me, I'm so sorry. I thought

you l-l-looked better," and the Curate fidgetted on his seat, moved his hat, and dropped his gloves after the manner of nervous men on such occasions.

"And what have you been doing lately. I always look to you to tell me all the gossip of the neighbourhood. Too late for croquet! What dissipations have you been indulging in?"

"N-n-nothing much. The fact is, I called to t-t-tell you some news, Miss Moseley," and here Mr. Filander paused and simpered.

"Of course, I hope you have a great deal to tell."

"The fact is, I'm g-g-going —"

"Away," interrupted Katie.

"No, no. I'm not g-g-going away. I'm g-g-going t-t-t-," and here Mr. Filander blushed painfully, and became inarticulate.

"Now, Mr. Filander," laughed Katie, "you said you were going to tell me some news, and you know you're not. You've

excited my interest under false pretences.”

“ N-no. I assure you, Miss Moseley, I’m g-g-going t-t-.”

“ Be married,” laughed Katie, “ and that is no news. I have known that for some time, and most heartily congratulate you and Mrs. Briarly.”

“ I’m so much obliged to you. I think it was you who f-first gave me courage to ask her.”

His stammer began rapidly to disappear, now the nervousness occasioned by announcing his marriage was over.

“ If you ever dare say that again,” replied Katie merrily, “ I will tell your *fiancée*, and then see if she don’t give you your *congé* at once.”

“ You wouldn’t do that ?” enquired the Curate with some anxiety.

“ I don’t know. I would recommend you not to try me too hard. If you make me out an abettor in your matrimonial schemes, I can’t say what I might be capable of. And when is it to be ?”

“ Well, I don’t know. I can’t quite say. The fact is, I can’t quite induce Eliza, I mean Mrs. B-Briarly, to fix the day.”

“ Then let me give you a little bit of advice, Mr. Filander,” rejoined Katie, laughing. “ Just fix it for her. We women rather like those little points settled for us. She’ll marry you two or three weeks after the time you name.”

The Curate’s face brightened. His belief in Katie was unbounded, for it was really her encouragement that had, in great measure, given him pluck to propose to the widow.

“ I am so much obliged, Miss Moseley,” he replied, picking up his hat, “ I took your advice before.”

“ Oh no, you didn’t,” interrupted Katie, “ and you know you’re not going to now. Good-bye. Mind I’m asked to the wedding, that’s all.”

“ Of course, of course,” and Mr. Filander took his departure.

“ He’ll make her a very good husband, and he wants some one to take care of him, poor little man,” mused the girl, as she watched him down the walk. “ Ah, Fortie, my darling ! will you ever ask me to marry you ? Never, never, again,” and throwing herself back on the sofa, Katie once more plunged into a sombre reverie.

CHAPTER XII.

THEN HE DOES LOVE HER.

THERE is a revulsion of feeling that comes over us, when we first realize that we are directing our steps towards the nearest station-house, with a policeman on either side by way of escort. Even in those humorous days, when the youth of the Metropolis thought the Epsom festival improperly kept without the supplementary row at Cremorne, this *petite promenade* which invariably befel some of the more hilarious and bolder revellers, must have suggested reminiscences of "dead sea fruit," &c. More especially when the trifling accessories or a black eye, a stove-in hat, and torn coat, heightened, as they usually did, the

dramatic effect of the situation. But we have changed all that, and no doubt Mr. Smith and the magistrates thought they were the Gods of wrath that produced this most salutary improvement. They did their best, but it was the weather really. A night's incarceration, and being mulcted in the morning, young England solemnizing his Derby carnival, was prepared for—he would run the risk even of severer penalties than that; but being thoroughly drenched, affected his spirits as it did his collars. He became limp and spiritless. What the weather will be at Cremorne on the anniversary of this festival has become proverbial.

Fortie could not help luxuriating in reflections of the above nature, as he found himself in company with five or six others tramping through the streets in custody of the New York police, at the termination of the gaming fracas, which indeed he can hardly have been said to have even witnessed. Two stretchers

accompanied them, on one lay the wounded man, on the other, covered with a cloth, was laid what a bare half hour ago had been Jim Halden. The police had naturally arrested every one they could put their hands on, and they had not let many of the gamblers slip through their fingers. On arrival at the station, Fortie asked to speak to the Inspector, and explained that he entered from the street as all this occurred on the first-floor, and was not even present at the fatal quarrel. In this he was confirmed by one of the police officers.

“Would you oblige me with your name?” inquired the Inspector.

“Merrington—Mr. Merrington, in the firm of Craig and Jackson.”

“Well, Mr. Merrington, you must stay here till you’ve been before the magistrate; but from what I hear of your case, I’ve no doubt he will let you out on bail. I recommend you to write a note to some friend to come and attend here

in that capacity as soon as it's morning. In the meantime, if you can take a sleep on that bench you can't do better."

A note from Fortie in the morning, speedily brought Seth Thorndale to his assistance.

"Waal!" observed that gentleman, with a grin, "if you ain't a nice article in new found relatives, may The Cracknell never fill up again. Creation, man, what's it all about? I discover my long lost cousin over night, and he kinder reckons I'll bail him out of a station-house next morning. If you don't sit down and turn it into a farce this minute, I'll go into court and swear I never saw you but once before, and then found I'd unaccountably mislaid my watch and fixings ten minutes afterwards."

"Don't chaff, Seth. I was an infernal fool to go into the place. I can't tell now what made me. You'll be answerable for me, won't you?"

"Friendship has its duties, they say,

and cousinship its obligations, I suppose. Yes, I'll go bail I never lose sight of you;" replied Seth, in tones of mock pathos.

Thorndale was so well known in New York, and the testimony of the police so much in Fortie's favour, that he was speedily liberated on Seth's recognizances that he should appear when called for.

"Bad business for you, Fortie," said the manager, as they walked away together. "You are doing so well now, and being mixed up in a gambling-house row ain't calculated to advance your prospects."

"No, but it's done and can't be helped. I am afraid though, this is safe to be a good deal talked about, and they're sure to insist on having my evidence at the next examination. However, there's nothing to show who fired the fatal shot that killed poor Halden. There were two or three revolvers going besides his own, so it may not come to a trial."

"No, but there'll be two or three examinations, and that comes pretty much to the same thing. Guess you're like the man who escaped from the fire, but who singed off his whiskers and eyebrows as he came down the ladder. You ain't burnt, but every one'll know you were in the blaze. Waal, good-bye for the present, I expect you're off for a wash and a shave, and I'm going down home again," and with a friendly nod the pair parted.

"Confound my infernal curiosity!" muttered Fortie, as he put the latch-key into his door. "It was mere whim induced me to enter that house, and as Seth says it's likely to be a costly whim to me."

A couple of days after this, Fortie called on Mrs. Thorndale. She welcomed him cordially, saying as she motioned him to a seat near her.

"I hear dreadful accounts of you, that you've been shooting, gambling and committing yourself to rowdyism generally. Sit down and make your confession, it is

better you should, you know, than leave me to think the dreadful things of you I do now."

"Most certainly," and dropping into a low chair, Fortie related his adventures on that eventful evening. He was a very fair *raconteur*, and Zare listened with flushed cheeks and parted lips to his story.

"Gracious, Fortie! what did you think when you heard the revolvers?"

"How much better it would have been if I were in the street."

"No, you didn't, or else you would have rushed down stairs. Why can't you men ever tell us the truth on these occasions. I suppose you think it the proper thing to simulate cowardice, when you're quite sure you haven't shown it. Trust us for finding out the converse. Women are very quick in detecting the men 'who make the giants first and then who kill them.'"

"Well, then, I suppose it was either

curiosity, or the innate taste for violence supposed to rage within us."

"Were you ever shot at, Fortie, in earnest?"

"Yes, once, and hit; I didn't like it."

"I thought so," said Zare, leaning her cheek on her fair hand.

"You thought so, and why on earth should you think so?"

"Oh, I don't know. Your curiosity to see somebody else shot, I suppose. Are you going to the Sheldons on Friday?"

"Yes. And you, of course. Their parties are always pleasant."

"Very. You admire Jessie Sheldon don't you?"

"'Muchly,' as Artemus Ward would say. She's a very nice girl, and they've always been so kind to me."

"She'd make you a very nice wife, Fortie."

"Pooh, Zare, don't chaff. I never think of her in that way."

“But why not? She will have a fair amount of dollars.”

“Perhaps so,” replied Fortie grimly, “but I shan’t marry a girl because she can keep me. You needn’t speculate on my matrimony, Zare.”

“You might do worse. She’s a nice girl and her having money is no drawback. If you make play, Fortie, I’ll hold you three dozen gloves on the result.”

“I tell you, I have no intention of doing anything of the kind.”

“Then he *does* love her,” murmured Zare, in an apparently absent manner.

“Good gracious! how provoking you are. I tell you I don’t.”

“Beg your pardon, I was thinking of something else. Don’t what?”

“Love Jessie Sheldon,” said Fortie, rising.

“No, I never thought you did,” replied Zare, looking up at him.

“Then what did you say so for?”

“I never did say so. My words

were : ‘ Then he *does* love her.’ ”

“ And what do you mean by that ? ”

“ What I said, that you still love her ; but she’s not Jessie Sheldon.”

“ You are speaking in enigmas,” said Fortie, in constrained tones.

“ Ah, yes, my cousin. Do you recollect telling me that ‘ that was your secret ’ at Saratoga, and I told you I should discover it ? Oh ! Fortie, you bungler, to think you could keep a secret from a woman.”

“ I don’t understand you.”

“ Oh, dear ! I’m so sorry,” retorted Zare, with mock anguish. “ How can I put it plainer ? ‘ You still love her.’ Must I say who she is ? ”

Fortie nodded.

“ Why, Kate Moseley, of course,” and as she spoke, Mrs. Thorndale never looked at her cousin, but appeared to be absorbed in a small work-basket that laid beside her.

For a few seconds, Fortie paced the room, and not a word passed between

them ; then dropping into a chair, he said in a low voice, "How did you learn this, Zare?"

"You shall know all if you will answer me one question. Is it true, Fortie?"

"Yes ; God knows it is. I love her as dearly as when I first told her so. I wish I did not, for she put but little faith in me when the trial came ;" and as he thought over all that time of recklessness and pain, Fortie buried his face in his hands.

He sat so for some minutes. He never thought of asking Zare how she had come to know all this. His thoughts were far away. He was looking back at a fair girlish face, the blue eyes lifted up to his own, the soft yellow hair caressing his cheek, as he held her in his arms that last time he saw her at St. Helens, just after he had made over Bess, that most evil of retrievers, to her custody ; when she had murmured words of love into his ear as she bade him good-bye, to be redeemed

only by that bitter letter. Then he thought of the crash that followed; the last cast of the dice. Once more he saw Trismegistus sweep past the winning-post, and a half-smile came over his face as, lifting his head from his hands, he recalled Skeffington's look of blank dismay when he announced that fatal objection.

A light hand on his arm, and Zare, with womanly tact and in pleading tones, says, "Won't you make a *confidante* of me, Fortie? In the last few minutes you have been living over again the old memories. Do you think the past can never be recalled?"

"I only wish it could not. Excuse me, I am very absent; but you touched on feelings I had hoped dead and buried."

"Don't say that, Fortie. Have you no curiosity to know how I surprised your secret?"

"True, I forgot; that was part of our bargain."

"Yes. Well, I know Kate Moseley. We

were at school together in Paris, and great friends. After the manner of most school-girls under such circumstances, we corresponded at a great rate at first, and then she told me she was going to be married. Whether she ever mentioned your name then, I forget; at all events, it made no impression on me. Gradually our correspondence slackened, though it has never wholly ceased. I knew that her engagement was broken off, and that she blamed herself severely on account of it, though she never told me the particulars. About a year ago, she mentioned that her former lover was in New York, she believed, but certainly this time never mentioned your name. When I met you at Saratoga, I can hardly explain why, but the idea dawned upon me that you were Kate Moseley's former lover. I wrote to her, mentioning that I had met you, and that we were intimate. An answer that I received two days ago fully confirmed my opinion."

“What did she say?” inquired Fortie.
“Is she well?”

“No; very far from it. She wrote in most lugubrious terms about herself. About you, she said simply that you had been very dear to her once; that she had behaved disgracefully to you, but that you would know the whole truth at last; that at present there was a wall built up between you beyond her power to pull down. She could only hope you would one day do her justice.”

“Good God!” said Fortie, “the way you women shift your positions and put us in the wrong, is something marvellous. That is precisely what I should have said, that I hoped she would some day do me.”

“Ah!” replied Zare, with a little *moue*,
“but, you see, she said it first, Fortie.”

“I don’t know. I believe I wrote that in my farewell letter to her.”

“I daresay. I told you I should find out your secret. You see, I have.”

“Yes; you have made yourself my

confidante," replied Merrington, in thick, guttural tones; "you will please to take the consequences. Do you think that girl still cares about me?"

"Impossible to say; but—" and here Zare paused, and looked fixedly at her companion.

"But what?" he asked, almost fiercely.

"If you care much about her, I think, Fortie, I'd go and see."

"That's your counsel, then?"

Zare nodded.

"Good-bye for the present, and don't be surprised if you hear I'm on my way to England before the week's over."

"I shall be more surprised if I don't; and, Fortie, one thing more. Don't forget she's worth winning. You will write to me, won't you?"

"Yes, as soon as ever I have anything to tell you."

"There now, I've done it," thought Zare, as Fortie left the room. "I wonder whether I've brought those two together

again? As if I hadn't known the whole story for the last month. Poor Katie wrote me the most elaborate account of the whole affair, even to the eccentric codicil in Sir Giles' will, as soon as she heard I knew her lover. What a lot of fibs I've been telling. I very nearly came to grief, too, asking him if he had ever been shot at. It was just all I could do to keep from drawing the story of that Dieppe duel from him. I'd have given anything to hear it. I know he'd have told it well, from the way he told the story of his fracas the other night. It was very good of me not to. In fact, though I've been telling stories all the afternoon, I feel that I have been extremely virtuous. It is the best thing he can do. Go home and marry Katie, and bring her back here with him. I'm afraid Jessie Sheldon won't quite approve of my manœuvres; but I can't help that. Good gracious! it's time to dress for dinner. How this afternoon has slipped away!"

Three days after his visit to Zare, Fortie stood on the deck of the homeward bound Cunard packet, gazing listlessly at the wooded shores of Staten Island. His employers had accepted his statement regarding the gambling fracas, and held him blameless of more than imprudence. His application for a month's leave to proceed to England they rather approved of. They had some pending business arrangements that rather required a confidential agent in that country, moreover as the senior partner observed, "Although, Mr. Merrington, we acquit you of more than thoughtlessness in this unfortunate business, it would be as well perhaps if you were out of the way till the affair has blown over, besides you can be of use to us in England." And so Fortie was on his way home to have one more look at St. Helens, to see Kate Moseley once again.

He had so schooled himself in these last three years (it was quite three years

since he got his letter of dismissal) to look upon everything between himself and Kate as so utterly a thing of the past, that an almost feverish impatience pervaded him now. Again and again, as he paced the deck, he argued to himself that Zare was probably mistaken, he ought to have recollected that women are ever arriving at conclusions on most insufficient premises. She probably knew but little about the case really. Katie had most likely casually remarked that she was afraid she had not behaved very well to him, and this Zare had heightened, pshaw, as if a woman could ever be held prosaic enough to tell the truth about a love affair. He was on a fool's errand no doubt, nevertheless he would go through with it now. But ever and anon there crossed up sweetly in his memory Zare's last words, "Don't forget she's worth winning," and inwardly he swore she was. Should he have to cross the Atlantic again without her, the prize was worth playing

for though he might fail to obtain it.

They had a fair passage, and the 'China' can reel off her daily miles as well as most ships, yet Fortie voted the time interminable from the hour they lost sight of Sandy Hook till that in which they first sighted Cape Clear. However, everything comes to an end at last, except agrarian outrage in Ireland, and in due course Fortie found himself at dinner at the Adelphi, that pleasantest of the many hostelries that adorn the fair queen of the Mersey. He had some thoughts of proceeding to St. Helens that night, but an examination of Bradshaw showed him that was an impossibility, so he was fain to rest where he was.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONCE MORE BY THE RIVER.

ONE of those warm, steamy, November mornings with which we are occasionally blessed in that somewhat gloomy autumnal month. When the sun after a short struggle with the early mists, breaks through them and asserts his majesty as if he would fain treat us to one more glimpse of the summer that has fled. The leaves have fallen apace of late; but to-day there is not a breath stirring. The misty dewdrops on the well nigh bare hedges glitter like diamonds in the sunbeams. The air is as soft as in early May, the atmosphere clear and cloudless.

Katie wanders listlessly round her garden, attended by Bess, and gazes ruefully

at the litter made by the dead leaves. She is not well, nothing actually the matter, but she is out of spirits, and has again to encounter disappointment. A day or two after we last saw her, she had received that letter of Zare Thorndale's and had answered it immediately. We know how much she had confided to Zare in her reply, and she had awaited with feverish impatience for further news of Fortie through the same channel; but mail after mail had arrived since then and brought no letter for her.

"How I wish Zare had never written," she murmured. "It was hard to bear before, but it is worse now. I do so long to hear of him again. Not of course that she could tell him anything of what I told her; but she might have let me know something more about him. She might surely have mentioned that she knew me and had heard from me."

Poor child, she was playing the hypocrite to herself, as if she had not devoutly

hoped that Zare would confide every word she had written to that wandering lover of hers. But Zare was a wise woman in her generation, she had plunged into this tangled love skein with all the ardour of her impulsive nature, and decided at once that it behoved her to put things straight. Fortie's flirtation with Jessie Sheldon, while she only suspected the truth and before she knew of their kinship, had discomposed her mightily. That obstacle cleared away, as it had been in her conversation with Fortie, she had deemed it best to tell him but just so much as would induce him to go to England. If they only once meet again, she argued, there will be no further necessity for my good offices. How well she played her part we have already seen.

At last Katie wandered through the wicket, and strolled slowly along the bank of the river. Very little tired her now, and she was soon glad to take advantage of a fallen tree and sit down. The warm

sunlight played through her yellow hair, and looking dreamily at the sparkling water, Katie leaned her head upon her hand and fell into a reverie that soon approached nearly to sleep. The figure of a man appeared round the bend of the stream, and though Katie saw him not, Bess pricked her ears, and uttered a low growl. It failed to arouse her mistress' attention, and raising herself, Bess advanced to reconnoitre. As the stranger advanced, her eyes dilated and her nostrils quivered, till suddenly her ears dropped, and with a low whimper of delight, Bess dashed forward, and in another minute was jumping up on, and overwhelming Fortie Merrington with the most violent demonstrations of affection.

The whimper of the dog had caught Katie's ear, she raised her head and saw Bess jumping up on the approaching stranger. No dog was ever more chary of her blandishments, and Katie sprang

to her feet in amazement. Another second, and she had recognized who it was, and sank back into her seat as pale as death.

“Down, Bess, will you down, confound you!” said Fortie, as he approached the tree. “Miss Moseley, I hope I don’t disturb you?”

Katie looked at him with quivering lips, but speak she could not.

Fortie seated himself by her side, and paused a moment before he spoke.

“And the beating of their own hearts was all the sound they heard.”

“Katie,” he said, at length, in very unsteady tones, “I have come from the other side the Atlantic on a bare hint from Zare Thorndale, that there was a chance things might once more be with us as they once were. To tell you that I love you as dearly as ever, and that I have never swerved from my truth to you since we last parted.”

He waited for her to speak, but she answered not a word. Her lips moved uneasily, and then bursting into a fit of hysterical sobbing, she threw herself upon his breast.

He gathered her in his arms, laid her head upon his shoulder, and sought to sooth her; but for some minutes, low moans and hysterical weeping were all that Katie could give vent to. At last, she gasped out,

“Forgive me!”

“Forgive you, my darling, yes! If you will be mine at last,” and leaning over her, he pressed his lips to her cheek. She nestled closer to him in acknowledgment of his caress, and the hysterical sobbing gradually died away, though the tears still stole down her face.

Fortie, very wisely, said nothing for some seconds, and Katie was quite content to be passive in his embrace. An exquisite feeling of being at rest stole over her. Her lover’s arms were about her,

he had kissed her and forgiven her. She felt at peace, and feared to break the spell by either speech or motion. She only knew how bitterly she had suffered during these last three years. Her short paroxysm of jealousy had been heavily atoned for.

“My darling,” whispered Fortie at last, “how could you have written me that cruel letter.”

“Hush!” she murmured, and a shiver ran through her frame. “Don’t, please don’t, speak of it yet. I can’t bear it. Fortie, dearest, I’ve been so miserable, you won’t be hard upon me, will you? If I have caused you pain, I have suffered much myself.”

“Then you believe in me now?”

“Ah yes! it’s long ago since I found out the whole truth about the Dieppe affair. Who do you think told me?” and as she spoke, it occurred to Miss Moseley to assume a more decorous position. She extricated herself from her lover’s em-

brace, and seated herself on the tree beside him.

“ Don’t know, I’m sure. Fripley Furnival, I suppose.”

“ No, it was not him ; but it was some one who knew the truth equally well—Lizzie Jerningham ”

“ The deuce ! Why how did you come to know her, Katie ? ”

“ Father took me up to London for change ; she was acting in Mr. Furnival’s new piece, and partly because she had made me so miserable, partly because I felt an interest in ‘ Sound at the Core,’ from knowing Mr. Furnival, I went to the theatre to see it and her. I was so struck with her, that I determined to know her. I got her address, and called upon her. It seems, Fortie,” continued Kate shyly, “ that you had told her all about me. She was cruel to me at first ; but I deserved it, and made me cry bitterly, when she told me how you said I had thrown you off like ‘ soiled gloves ;’ but she relented

at last, told me the whole story of your duel. How you had fought in her defence because she was cruelly libelled, and we parted great friends. But, Fortie, I don't mind telling you now—I had cause to be jealous. Women never make mistakes about one thing. We can always detect one another's love, if we are interested concerning it. I don't mind telling you now, but she did love you though you might not have cared about her."

How much the knowledge that Fripley Furnival had been engaged to the actress for the last eighteen months, conduced to this comfortable indifference concerning her former predilection, I leave my lady readers to determine, but opine that it had some weight.

"I cared about her a good deal, Katie, though I never loved her. She was the sole woman friend I had in London at the height of my reckless career. Plenty of good advice she gave me too, which like most good advice, 'fell by the way-

side.' I have paid pretty dearly for the follies of those days ; but the bitterest drop in the cup has ever been the loss of you. You believe me now, darling, don't you ?"

"It was my fault, Fortie ; but you have forgiven me," and once more, Katie nestled close to his side.

"You've as much to forgive, dearest, as I," he replied, passing his arm round her, "but we belong to each other now, for life—don't we ?"

"Yes ;" she whispered, softly.

Once more he kissed her, and how much longer these reunited lovers might have gone on in this preposterous manner, the narrator cannot presume to guess. But fortunately, Bess conceiving herself much neglected, reared herself up, placed her fore-paws on Fortie's knees, and gave vent to a most melancholy whine—verging, indeed, upon a regular howl.

"Down, you jealous old woman ;" said Fortie, laughing, as he caressed the

retriever. "You see, Katie, you have one formidable rival already, who is making desperate overtures to me. Come along—you must give me some lunch, as you used to do in the old days."

They rose from their seat; but as they did so, Fortie suddenly placed a hand on either of Katie's shoulders, and exclaimed,

"Let me look at you, little one. What have you been doing with yourself? What do you mean by these pale cheeks and dark circles under your blue eyes? Have you been ill?"

"I have not been strong for some time," replied the girl, tearfully, as she twisted herself out of his grasp. "You must give me your arm home, Fortie," and as she spoke, she slipped her little hand beneath it. "But I shall be quite well now," she continued, "that you are here to nurse me."

They walked on in silence. Fortie recollected now that Zare had told him

Katie spoke of her health as delicate. What if he had recovered her, only to lose her for ever. A chill ran through his veins at the bare thought. Genuine love is timorous ever on this point. And before they reached the cottage, Fortie was conscious that his companion was leaning very heavily upon his arm. In her weak state, the excitement of the morning had been much for her. Nature at times reasserts her privileges, and Katie had been barely inducted on her own sofa, before she leant back and swooned quietly away. Fortie rang the bell furiously, which was quickly answered by a smart-looking maid-servant; and Birkett Moseley, who entered immediately after, was greeted with the tableau of his daughter lying senseless on the sofa, Merrington kneeling by her side chafing her hands, while the maid-servant was bathing her temples with vinegar.

The old man paused for a moment in astonishment at the sight of Fortie, then,

the passionate love he bore Katie conquered all other feeling, and he rushed to the sofa. "Not dead! My God! not dead! What is it? What has happened?"

"Don't be alarmed," replied Fortie, "she has only fainted from over fatigue. She will be herself again directly."

For a moment, Birkett Moseley peered anxiously into his child's face, as if he half doubted the truth of this statement; but even as he did so a faint tinge of colour re-appeared in the pale cheeks—the lips quivered slightly—there was a fluttering of the eyelids, and with a long drawn sigh Katie came to herself.

"Very foolish of me," she said, slowly, as her eyes rested on her lover. "Get me some wine, Fortie, dear, and then I'll go up-stairs and lie down."

She swallowed the stimulant which was handed to her, pressed her lover's hand for a second, and then nodding to her father, took the servant-girl's arm, and

left the room. For a few seconds there was silence between the two men, and then Birkett Moseley said,

“Beg your pardon, Mr. Merrington; but I am right glad to see ye. I ought to have said so before, but Katie makes me anxious. I never knew her go off in that way before.”

“I’m afraid I’m to blame for it, Moseley. You doubtless know how all got wrong between Katie and myself, and know also now that you dealt me hard justice down here.”

“That’s so—I’ll tell ye, Mr. Fortie, there were a time when ye’d no bitterer enemy than myself in all Lincolnshire. I believed all they said again ye; I thought, fine gentleman-like, ye’d made a fool of my girl, and had, meb’be, thought to do worse. She’s the one thing on earth I have to care for. Ye’ll not blame me. Things looked black against ye then, and tho’ I’d loved ye from a boy, I wished ye’d died before ever ye set eyes on Katie.

I know the truth now, and that though ye were a bit daft like about your own affairs, ye were main true to my girl. She knows it too; but I need not maunder on about that. I reckon ye have had your say to each other."

"Yes, Moseley, Katie and I stand as we did three years ago. She believes in me now, and knows that I have come only to claim her as my wife, if you'll let me. You gave your consent once, you know."

"And do again; tell ye what, Mr. Merrington, ye'd better get married quick. Damn it all! ye've left little time to spare. This is the 20th of November."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, I dunno just know. Meb'be ye never heard of Sir Giles' will?" said Birkett, peering rather inquisitively at his companion.

"No. He never left me anything, did he? How can it concern me?"

"Oh, I dunno, I was just talking any-

how. No, Mr. Fortie, there worn't a sixpence left your way. But poor Katie's been a deal fretted about ye; and she's not owre strong, I thought it'd perhaps be best."

"It will undoubtedly suit me best, for I still owe so much money in this country, that my creditors if they once arrived at the fact of my being in England, might—nay, probably would—arrest me."

"Ye won't take it a liberty. Might I be so bold, Mr. Fortie, as to ask what you do owe?"

"More than I can ever pay," laughed Fortie. "Some seven or eight thousand perhaps. But I'm doing well the other side; and owe no man sixpence there. I sowed my wild oats here, and a precious crop they were. I'm an exile, if not for life, for many years from England."

"Ye never can tell; things right themselves in a curious fashion. But were be your things? ye'll sleep here, I'm thinking."

“Thanks; if you can put up with me for two or three days. I left my portmanteau at the station.”

“All right, Mr. Fortie, I’ll just send a lad off wi the gig for un.”

Katie did not make her appearance again till towards evening. She looked pale, but her face bore an expression of quiet happiness that Birkett Moseley had not seen there for many a long day. So different from the worn, weary glance she had bestowed upon most things of late. A smile played about her mouth, and there was once more light in the blue eyes, which were lifted ever and again so shyly to her lover. She had never felt so timid with him before. She had loved him honestly when they had parted, but it was with the love of a girl; now the strong, passionate love of a woman surged within her breast. She was half frightened herself at the greatness of her love.

“Fortie, dear,” she said, as she nestled to his side in the window-seat, “I want

you to do what I ask you, and the worst of it is, I don't quite know how to ask you to do what I want."

"Well, this really is awkward," laughed Merrington. "Depend upon it, I will do what you want; but if you don't tell me what it is, I foresee there may be difficulties in arriving at what that may be."

"Don't tease me. Will you believe I have good reasons for what I do?"

"Yes, my darling. Where I give my love, I give my faith."

"And you won't be very much shocked if I do something quite out of the common?"

"You've told me you've good reasons, Katie, that is sufficient."

"Ah, but will you be content to wait three days before I give you my reasons?"

"Yes, dearest," said Fortie, as he passed his arm round her.

"Well," said Katie, hesitatingly, "I want you to marry me at once," and

here the girl blushed scarlet, and hid her face upon her lover's broad breast.

"Is that all! Why, haven't I come over three thousand miles on purpose? When do you want to be married, Katie?"

"Oh! don't laugh at me, please don't! You shall know all in three days. Will you marry me the day after to-morrow?" and again the tell-tale blood rushed to the very roots of Katie's hair.

"Yes. It's very flattering, you know, to find that you are so dreadfully afraid of losing me. I really, Miss Moseley, can't express how charmed I am that your eyes have been so properly opened to the value of the treasure you are about to possess."

"Fortie, please don't!" whispered the girl, "I can't bear it!"

"Nonsense, darling! I won't laugh at you any more, but make all arrangements for our marriage on Friday. I'm quite as anxious to make sure of you as you can be of me," and here Fortie bent down

and kissed the flushed little face that was hiding itself in his bosom.

A short interview that Birkett Moseley had held with his daughter upstairs about an hour previous to the foregoing conversation would account for it.

"Katie, my girl," he had said, tapping at her door, "if ye're well enoo, I've something to say to ye."

"Come in, father. I am quite well again now, and, oh ! so happy !"

"Well, lass, I'm right glad to hear it. All's well between Fortie Merrington and you, I hope, at last ? I've been talking to him a bit. I rather jealousied he might ha' heard something about Sir Giles' will after all, and that that might ha' been what brought him back."

"You wrong him, father ; you do, indeed !" said the girl, proudly.

"No, I don't. I feel sure, certain, that he knows nought about it ; that he's come for you, for your own self, Katie. and nothing else."

“Thanks, father; you do him justice.”

“Yes; but all the same, lass, recollect that this is the 20th of November, and that Sir Giles died on the 24th. If you two are not married by that, the five thousand pounds goes back to Sir Horace. Now Mr. Merrington is a poor man; it would be as well, child, ye should na’ go to him quite empty-handed. Shall I tell him all about it?”

“Let me think a moment, father,” replied Katie. For a few minutes she mused over the question Birkett Moseley had propounded. At last, while the blood flushed her pale cheeks, she said, “No; he loves me truly, and will trust me. I will ask him to marry me in time to save that myself. I would rather he never knew anything about the legacy till after we are wedded. Leave it to me, father.”

“Very well; only bear in mind there is no time to be lost.”

“It shall be as you wish this evening.”

And so as we have already seen, it was. After Katie had retired for the night, Fortie and Birkett Moseley had a long confabulation together, during which it was settled that Merrington should procure a license on the morrow, and that the day after, he and Katie should be quietly married.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EXCEPTIONAL WEDDING.

MR. PHINNY, solicitor, bill discounter, &c., was as astute a man as could well be found in his somewhat nefarious trade. If as a young man you talked much with Mr. Phinny (a luxury, by the way, for which you must have paid in some form), you could hardly have failed to have been struck by the great philanthropy of his views and aspirations. According to his account, his life had been passed in succouring too confiding youth in cases of financial difficulty; that he had so many times failed to rescue his young clients from the slough of impecuniosity into which they had fallen, was chiefly attributable to their own rashness and

wrong-headedness, conjoined with the obstinacy and ill-natured suspicions of their near relations. He would have told you that he had suffered much anxiety of mind, to say nothing of severe pecuniary losses on several of these occasions. But the good man never tired of trying to arrange matters for any one who had any tangible property left, and seemed to fatten upon the losses he so moaned over. To older clients he dropped this unctuous vein, he washed his hands less, and looked after his security more; up to three-and-twenty, he was wont to observe, if it is at all within reason, there is always somebody who will pay up for them when the screw is applied.

It may be borne in mind that it was through this worthy individual that Sir Horace had obtained possession of a large amount of Fortie Merrington's protested bills; that it was he whom he had employed, by the exercise of the pressure these liabilities enabled him to bring to

bear, to literally hunt Fortie out of England, and it was to his vigilance that he trusted for the earliest discovery of his cousin's return, should it take place, and to at once put in motion the machinery already efficaciously used before. In short, till that 24th of November had expired, Fortie must, in case of his reappearance, be either once more hunted out of England, or should the terror of arrest fail to produce that result, he must be simply locked up till after that date.

Mr. Phinny had agents or correspondents in most of the large towns in England—of course he had one in Liverpool. Now as he knew that Fortie Mer-rington had fled to America, he naturally had given particular directions to his agent on the banks of the Mersey to keep a vigilant look on the arrivals from "the States." Fortie, even had he thought of it, which he did not, could scarcely have sailed from New York under an assumed name. His mercantile connexion there

forbade it. Consequently his name figured in full amidst the list of passengers by the 'China.' While he was eating his dinner at the Adelphi, a telegraph apprised Mr. Phinny of his presence in England.

Another message was at once dispatched to Liverpool for further particulars, while that night's post bore the unwelcome intelligence to Sir Horace. The telegraph duly informed Mr. Phinny, next day, that "Merrington slept at Adelphi. Left this day from Lime Street Station. Destination not known."

The solicitor proceeded at once to business. Turning over a little sheaf of "promises to pay," all decorated with Fortie's autograph, he selected one for six hundred and fifty pounds, and made immediate application for a writ of attachment thereon. It was, of course, granted, and ere nightfall, that evil strip of parchment was in the hands of a sheriff's officer.

The next morning brought a letter from Sir Horace, urging the promptest mea-

tures, and mentioning either St. Helens, or London, as the most probable destination of his cousin.

“ Ah !” muttered Mr. Phinny, “ business man the Baronet, sends me the precise information I was wanting. We must have another writ out of course ; the London one is done, but we must, also, have one for the country. Send for Noakes,” he continued, addressing his clerk.

In due course, Mr. Noakes appeared. We have not seen him since he had such a lucrative evening at Long’s Hotel, when he sat up all night keeping watch and ward over Jim Halden. Mr. Phinny instructed him to proceed forthwith to the County of Lincolnshire, and there take out a writ of attachment for six hundred and fifty pounds with costs, and to put the same in execution with all possible dispatch. In fact, the urgency of the case was much impressed on him.

It was a beautiful and curious coinci-

dence that Fortie, who had run up, for the day, to town, on business of which the procuring a license formed part, should travel back again to St. Helens in the same train with Mr. Noakes. That worthy, of course, knew Merrington by sight, and as was likely to happen recognised him on the platform at King's Cross; but Mr. Noakes was not as yet in possession of authority to arrest him. He had to see the Deputy Sheriff of Lincolnshire to obtain that, the London writ not being in his hands. However, he had no difficulty in ascertaining Fortie's destination, and made no doubt of securing his man next day. "In fact," as he said, "it seems all hordained for it, blowed if it don't. What a game! to think of my travelling down with the werry party as I'm sent to look arter."

Old Birkett Moseley's temper had been sore tried that morning, at the conclusion of a short interview he had had with Sir Horace on business, the Baronet had

suddenly turned fiercely on him, and exclaimed: "I'm given to understand my scapegrace cousin has dared to set foot again in England. It's of a piece with the general tenour of his career. His liabilities are enormous, and from what I hear, he stands every chance of rotting his life away in a debtor's prison. If he's fool enough to show himself here, his arrest is imminent. A fact I should recommend you to bring to his notice, should you see him."

"Meb'be he thinks, Sir Horace, you might assist him a bit," and Birkett peered anxiously under his grizzled eyebrows at the Baronet.

"Not I, forsooth, he deserves little grace at my hands. But as you know, I have not the means, and I may as well add even less inclination to help him."

"Still he's your cousin, Sir Horace," replied the old man, looking inquisitively at his master. "It's little kin ye've left in the world I'm thinking."

“And as far as he is concerned I rather wish it were less,” retorted the Baronet, coarsely. “He assumed my place here in Sir Giles’ life time, and but for his own mad folly would have retained it after his death. I owe your daughter some thanks for that, Moseley, and feel grateful to her; notwithstanding, I fear I don’t stand high in that young lady’s good graces.” And the mocking tones in which the latter part of the sentence was couched, made Birkett’s pulses tingle. An attack upon his daughter touched the old man on his most sensitive point.

“Well, I’ve naught more to say,” he observed. “Meb’be Mr. Fortie ’ll be a rich man one of these days yet.”

“What do you mean?” inquired Sir Horace, sharply, and his fierce black eyes looked as if they would fain read the steward’s inmost thoughts.

“Oh, I dunno. I mean nothing, it happens so sometimes. But I’m blethering about, when there’s lots to be

done. Good morning, Sir Horace."

The Baronet mused a little over Birkett Moseley's last remark. "Could it mean anything? No, his face was as stolid as if carved in wood, as he uttered it. This is the 22nd," he murmured, "two days more, and there will be no chance of that five thousand being claimed, and then, Fortie Merrington, it's little I care what becomes of you."

The following morning dawned as much as an indifferent November day can be said to do. It is hardly a correct expression with regard to a good many days at that sombre period of the year, when the dark curtain of night is succeeded only by a grey mist in the country and a dense yellow fog in London. It does not actually rain, you would rather it did. A downpour would be infinitely preferable to the dank, chilling, heavy atmosphere that surrounds one. Depressing to the spirits, a ghostly embodiment of rheumatism and lumbago, the fell shadows of which imagination can

depict as stalking abroad in all the plenitude of their power, as their strokes fall rapid and fierce on countless victims. Such was the ominous breaking of Katie's wedding day.

The Reverend Mr. Filander had been duly warned, and at half-past eleven Merrington and Kate Moseley were to be married in the quiet little church of St. Helens. Nobody, of course, was asked to the wedding; the Curate had been only told by Fortie late in the evening before, and then requested to mention the fact to no one. The marriage was to be strictly private.

But from time immemorial "the unbidden and unwelcome guest" has demonstrated his capability of arriving in time for wedding, feast, or funeral, and about ten the train deposited at the nearest station to St. Helens, from which it was distant some two miles, "the unbidden guest" in the person of Mr. Noakes.

"Well," observed that gentleman, "this

is about as gallus a day as ever I see! Blowed if I think it respectable weather to make a caption in! I'm a kind-'earted man, and I likes 'em to be blessed with a little sunshine without, when I'm going to give 'em this sort of weather internally! But the guv'nor's horders was decisive. 'No time to be lost.' So I 'spose I must. Meanwhile, three pen'orth of rum would come grateful to the innards," and Mr. Noakes turned into a small tavern that stood close by the station.

Mr. Noakes was a man of gallantry in his way, and the combined fascinations of the bar-maid and a good fire, induced him to delay his walk, and even to imbibe another three pen'orth of rum by way of keeping the fog out; consequently, it was a good half-hour before he commenced his walk to St. Helens. He was of an affable and talkative disposition naturally, to which, perhaps, the two glasses of rum still further contributed. What with gossiping with two or three

labouring men that he encountered on his way, and indulging in a little light *badinage* with one or two cherry-cheeked country girls at cottage-doors, it was just half after eleven that he paused outside St. Helens' churchyard, and observed some four or five people enter the church.

"Wots hup, six pen'orth of half-pence?" he inquired from a small boy, who was apparently watching the proceedings with great interest from a seat on the wall.

"It's a wedding. Feyther tell I Miss Moseley and Squire Merrington be going to get married—feyther's clerk; but it ain't a spicy wedding, be it?"

That the principal object to be attained by the serving of the writ he had in his pocket was the prevention of this identical wedding, was a thing of which Mr. Noakes had no conception. He was rather put out about it, if truth must be told; but it was from totally different motives. If Mr. Noakes had a professional weakness, it was what he deno-

minated "a tenderness for swells." He had found, as a rule, that they paid liberally for civility. He did not like the idea of arresting Fortie as he left the church, and he made up his mind not to interfere with him till he had regained Moseley's house. A few judicious questions to his youthful acquaintance, had elicited the fact that the wedding-party had walked to the church from the pretty red cottage lying on the river bank in the bottom, and he resolved to allow them to regain the door thereof before he interfered.

A quarter of an hour, and Merrington, with Katie on his arm, emerges from the church. Though she is plainly dressed, and not at all in bridal array, Katie looks very pretty this misty morning. She looks up at her husband, as he bends over her, with a trustful happy smile, and her heart shines out of her eyes.

Birkett Moseley follows behind, talking with Mr. Filander. His face is jubilant in

the extreme. Has he not seen his darling married to the man of her heart? and is he not exulting a little at the idea of claiming that five thousand pounds from Sir Horace. The Baronet's sneer at what good stead Katie had stood him in regarding his inheritance, had rankled not a little in the old man's mind, and his fingers tingled with satisfaction as they clutched the certificate of her marriage.

But Mr. Filander makes his final congratulations, and bids them good-bye, and the trio near the door of the cottage. A man lounges by the little gate, and as Fortie opens it for his bride to pass through, touches him on the shoulder, and says curtly, "You're my prisoner, Mr. Merrington. Suit of Feybus and Gideon, for six fifty and costs."

Fortie starts for a second, then recovering himself, says "All right, come inside."

"What does he want? What does he mean, Fortie?" inquires Katie, anxiously.

“Nothing, darling. Come into the house, and then we will see about it,” and Merrington hurries his bride up the little gravel path, and into the parlour.

“Eh!” says Moseley, “what’s this? Hum! sheriff’s officer, arn’t ye—ye look like one. Have ye a writ again Mr. Merrington?”

“A little trifle of six fifty, which he hoverlooked when last at home. My name is Noakes, distinguished in the perfession for hallays making things comfortable. Appy to sit down and try your hale, till such times as Mr. Merrington gets his portmanteau packed to his liking. No one hates hinterfering with connubal felicity more than I do; but horders is horders, and mine’s hobligatory.”

“Oh, Fortie!” cried Katie, with terror depicted on her countenance. “What does he mean?”

“Hush, darling; don’t be foolish. It is lines, the bygone follies cropping up against one so quickly. I’m arrested for

debt, dearest, don't be frightened, they can't transport me or anything of that kind;" but here Katie burst into tears, and refused to be comforted.

A violent peal on the bell, rung by Birkett Moseley, caused her to raise her head from her husband's shoulder.

"Tell John to put the mare into the dog-cart at once," he exclaimed, addressing the servant girl who answered the summons; "and then bring a pitcher of beer here. Now gie us that bit o' parchment, and let's ha' a look what it comes to. Don't ye fret, my lass; I'll just drive over to Hurlingford, and be back wi' the brass in less than an hour. Listen, Katie," and here he leant over his daughter and whispered into her ear, "thou'st brought ye're husband five thousand this day, mind; and ye're old father don't mind advancing the money to pay off this shark. Don't ye cry over it, child. I'll be back in no time. Meanwhile, Katie, you tell him about Sir Giles' will."

So while her father drove over to the Hurlingford Bank, Katie told her husband about the queer codicil that left five thousand pounds to her, upon condition she married Fortie within three years of the testator's death.

"It was that, dearest," she continued, "made me forget my sex and ask you to marry me at once," and the blood flew to Katie's temples even now, at the recollection of how she had pleaded that their marriage might take place immediately. "This is the 22nd, and Sir Giles, you know, died on the 24th; the three years were so nearly over, and I thought it would be such a triumph to come to you not quite empty-handed. You're not angry with me, are you?"

"No; but I wonder—why didn't you ever write to me, Katie? My letter on leaving England told you how I loved you. Lizzie Jerningham had convinced you how false the charges against me were."

"Oh! Fortie," said Kate, as she laid her

hand on his arm, "can't you understand a woman better than that. It would have looked like bribing you to come back to me. I would have died rather than have written you such a letter. I did what I could," she continued, looking up at him with an arch smile. "I made a humble confession of my wrong doings regarding you to Zare Thorndale. I couldn't tell her that it was for your information ; but I didn't tell her to keep it a secret. Zare seems to have understood pretty well what I meant. She has been very cruel and very kind."

"How do you mean, Katie?"

"She was very kind and clever in sending you back to me ; but she made me very miserable. She might have written. Mail after mail passed, and no answer to that letter. I felt that it was my last chance. All these three years I had hoped you would come back ; but it seemed to me that if you did not come now, you never would ; and, Fortie, I began to think it was to be never."

“ Ah ! well, darling, you’ll have to share my fortunes now, whatever they may be. The interior of a debtor’s prison looks rather a likely place for spending our honeymoon in just now,” he observed ruefully.

“ Nonsense. Father wouldn’t allow that ; and there’s our five thousand pounds besides, remember.”

“ True, oh, daughter of Cræsus.”

The quick rattle of wheels is followed by the speedy entrance of Birkett Moseley. “ All right, lass, I’ve brought the brass and to spare. I’ve gi’en ye no wedding present yet, Katie ; but I mean to fill up your purse, child, afore ye start, so that ye may buy some gewgaws and fripperies for yoursel. Well, my friend, I hope you found the yale to your liking. Gad zooks, it dunno look as if ye’d much fault to find wi it.”

“ Much obliged, I ’ave been most ’ospitably treated,” replied Mr. Noakes, rising from his seat at the end of the apartment, “ and am delighted to find

things is all going to be adjusted pleasant like."

Moseley soon counted out the money, and with one more draught to Mr. Merrington and his bride's 'ealth and 'appiness, that worthy took his departure.

"Now, Mr. Merrington," said Birkett, "I want ye both to come up wi me to the Manor House, and have it out with Sir Horace. He'll be clean mad, when he hears ye're wedded. He never thought to have to part with that five thousand."

"I'll come with you, Moseley; but we must not take Katie. She's not strong, and it's no use exposing her to what is likely to prove a stormy interview. Go and lie down and rest, darling, while we do battle for your rights."

A grateful smile repaid Fortie for his solicitude. Katie felt that harsh language would, probably, pass on both sides, and that she had hardly strength to undergo what she knew was likely to take place at the forthcoming meeting.

"I will go and lie down," she said, "I'm a little tired. Come back as quick as you can, Fortie, and tell me all about it."

So Moseley and Merrington made their way across the fields to the Manor House. They a little settled the plan of the campaign on the way, although Birkett did not confide to his companion a reserve force he had in hand. Sir Horace was at home, and the two were speedily ushered into his study. He rose as they entered.

"That I am surprised, Fortie Merrington, at this visit," he remarked, "I need scarcely say, considering the terms upon which we last parted. You must have strong reasons to present yourself at a house in which your appearance can but be deemed an intrusion."

"Yes, my reasons *are* strong, though valid, and I've no doubt disagreeable. I will detain you but a few moments. I have simply to inform you that Kate Moseley and I were married this morning; and

that in consequence she claims a legacy of five thousand pounds under our uncle's will."

"Married!" exclaimed Sir Horace, and it was with difficulty he could master his feelings sufficiently in some sort to mask the bitterness. "Allow me to congratulate you," he said, after a moment's pause, "and to further advise you to bear your bride to foreign parts forthwith."

"And why so?" inquired Merrington.

"Because, Fortie Merrington, though your debts in this country may have faded from your recollection, you will find your creditors have better memories. A debtor's prison may chance to be your bridal chamber, if you linger long. I give you good advice. I happen to know that the gin is set, the snare is laid. Your discounting friends are fowlers of mark, bear in mind; no neophytes at the trade."

"Singular the correctness of your information on these points. I have been arrested already to-day, but friends came

to my assistance. One might almost deem you in correspondence with mine enemies."

"You are fortunate in your friends," sneered the Baronet, with a most vindictive flash of his dark eyes at Moseley. "I presume they will see you through your liabilities."

"I can't tell, at all events I need not try them so hardly. This five thousand pounds which I come into, or rather my wife does on our marriage, will go a long way to extricate me."

"Ha! so after fooling this wretched girl and then deserting her, you have come back at the last moment to marry her for the sake of this money. Better for her fair fame, perhaps, had you made up your mind sooner."

Birkett Moseley's face worked fearfully, and his eyes glittered with an evil light under their shaggy brows; but ere he could open his lips, Fortie's voice rang out clear and strong.

“You lie, and you know it. I’ll trouble you to remember that lady is my wife, and if you venture to asperse her character, by God, don’t trust to your gown for protection.”

“Bah,” said Sir Horace, contemptuously, “we De Dribys can generally rely on our hands to guard our heads. You talk big, sir, you would perhaps hardly crow so loud were my hands not so tied,” and at that moment, the Baronet bitterly regretted that he was in holy orders. He was to the full as fell and reckless of danger as any of his race, and would have willingly turned this unwelcome claim into a personal quarrel if he could, and but for his profession he saw clearly it might have been reduced to the arbitrament of the pistol.

“Yes, I’ll do you that justice,” said Fortie, mastering his passion by a violent effort. “Your race never wanted for pluck; but be careful how you speak lightly of my wife. Your own blood runs in

my veins too, and we none of us pass over words of insult. The question at present is when you intend to settle this legacy? We look for a prompt payment thereof."

"I've told Moseley already that I intend to dispute that codicil. It was made by an old man in his dotage. The lawyers will have to decide upon the legality of the claim."

"Yes, Sir Horace," broke in Moseley, in quick, eager, tremulous tones, "but every one about him knows that Sir Giles was as right in his mind as ever he was, till meb'be the last night. I could just go into court and swear it this minute."

"Considering your daughter benefits thereby, and that you would be the person accused of using undue influence on the occasion, you would of course be a most valuable witness," retorted the Baronet, sarcastically.

"You mean to resist this claim then?" inquired Moseley.

"Most indubitably."

“Then listen to me,” and as he spoke the old man started from his chair, and his whole frame quivered with the passion that raged within him. “’Twas your race made me, and I’m main grateful to all but you. Priest as you are, ye never spared my darling—a minute back only and ye threw foul names at her. I know naught much about the Scriptures, but I mind a chapter about Nathan and David. If ye didn’t take the old man’s pet lamb, ye threw a blight upon her. You it was who drove Mr. Fortie into exile, you it was who poisoned poor Katie’s ears against him. They gie seven years for poisoning a bullock, I wonder what they reckon right for poisoning a fellow-creature’s mind.”

“Stop! sir;” cried the Baronet, “take yourself and your rhodomontade off, or I shall ring for the servants to remove you.”

“Ye’ve dared me,” continued Moseley, his voice raised almost to a shriek, “and

I will speak. Nigh every mortgage on the property is in my hands. I've claims to more than one hundred thousand pounds on the estate. Ye shall see what I can do. Meb'be you don't know the difficulties a falling man has to raise money—ye shall now, and I'll try hard if ye can still call St. Helens your own this day three months. Ye sneer at Mr. Fortie for trusting to his creditors not recollecting him. 'Twas in trying to buy up his liabilities I found out who held them all. His are nothing compared to yours, and such mercy as ye meant meting to him, such I intend dealing to you."

The faces of his two auditors were a study, as Moseley poured forth his invective. Fortie's expressed simple bewilderment—that his father-in-law was a well-to-do man, and saved a bit of money, he had no doubt; but when he talked of holding mortgages of over a hundred thousand pounds on the manors connected with St. Helens, his astonishment knew no bounds,

and the predominant idea in his mind was that the old man was talking nonsense in his wrath. But Sir Horace knew better. His face paled, as Moseley proclaimed himself nearly sole mortgagee of the property. He felt there was no improbability about that, and recognised at once to what straits a relentless creditor so situated might drive him to. He winced too at finding how much Moseley knew about his buying up of his cousin's liabilities—a secret he thought that lay between himself and Mr. Phinny (discounter and philanthropist). He felt that he had but scant claim to be indulgently dealt with. Nevertheless, he showed but little sign that the bolt had struck the mark. He rang the bell, and remarked, coldly,

“These things had better be settled by our respective lawyers. Personal interviews seem productive of loss of temper. If Mr. Moseley's statement has any foundation, I can only congratulate him

on a long and successful course of consummate rascality. Show these gentlemen out," he continued, as the servant entered, and with this Parthian shot, he abruptly quitted the room.

CHAPTER XV.

IN BUSINESS.

BIRKETT MOSELEY had been hardly fair to Sir Horace in the torrent of invective that he had given vent to, though he was in the main correct.

It certainly was Horace who had carried the tidings of Fortie's engagement to Sir Giles; he it was who had circulated that garbled version of the Dieppe affair; and he it was who, being in reality Fortie's principal creditor, had, by the pressure thus placed at his disposal, made him fly the kingdom. And yet he only precipitated events, he did not cause them.

All these things would have come to pass, without Sir Horace opening his lips or stirring a hand's breadth in the matter.

Fortie himself had brought all these things on his own head. Scandalized he had been, it is true, in the matter of the duel ; but if you do battle for the priestesses of Melpomene or the daughters of Thalia, it is but fair to suppose it is for love of the lady's bright eyes. That his mistress should reward the knight who bears her colours in the fray, is an old law of chivalry.

The two left the Manor House in silence, and few words passed between them on their way to the cottage. Fortie asked but one question. "It was all true that you told Sir Horace, I suppose?" he inquired, looking curiously at his companion.

"Aye, lad, every word of it," and Birkett Moseley relapsed once more into silence.

Fortie made his way straight to his wife's room, and recounted the particulars of the scene at the Manor House, to which Katie listened with undisguised astonishment.

“I can’t understand it,” she said. “If this is true, and you say you think it is, father is a very rich man, is he not?”

“Yes, darling, so rich, that had I known what I know now, I should never have dared to come home and ask you to marry me.”

“Ah but, Fortie, you see, thank goodness! you didn’t know it. What’s done can’t be undone, and you won’t love your little wife less because her father turns out to be rich, will you?”

“No, Katie; I wooed her for herself as she well knows. No feeling of that kind, thank God! can come between us, though you have turned out the daughter of Cræsus I termed you a few hours ago in jest.”

“Yes, it sounds like it. I’m so happy that your pride never had the chance of building up that wall between us. As it was,” she said, colouring, “I had to ask you to marry me; but if you had an

inkling of this, Fortie, you would have refused me, you know you would."

"We won't speculate on what I'm glad to say didn't occur. I've worn 'a sair heart' for you, Katie, these three years, and deserved it. I only thank God it has ended in your being mine at last."

The next day the pair departed for London, where Moseley was to join them at the end of the week.

"Ye'll take care of her, Mr. Fortie," muttered the old man, as he bade them good-bye at the station. "She's no been strong lately; ailing a wee, and wants looking after. I don't misdoubt ye; but mind, I'm trusting ye wie what I valley more than all the money I talked of yester noon."

"I know it. I can only say I value her much as you," and wringing the old man's hand, Fortie jumped into the carriage.

"He's a good lad, and I think he's real fond of her," muttered the old man, and

there was a moisture under the rugged brows as the train glided away.

A curt note dismissed Moseley from the stewardship he had held so many years, and he was bid to prepare to hand over his books, accounts, &c., to a neighbouring solicitor in the ensuing week. Left to himself, the old man reflected sadly on that angry interview with Sir Horace. True, he did not like the present Baronet, but he had a species of dog-like devotion to both the family and place. He had never said so much, but for that bitter sneer at his daughter. Even the enormous hold he had upon the property had, to a certain extent, been the result of this feeling. He had ever been a saving man, and had speculated with much success in corn and all kinds of agricultural produce, and in nothing more, perhaps, than land itself; he had amassed a good bit of capital, moreover, as a land valuer. Sir Giles, ever in difficulties regarding money, had recourse to perpetual mort-

gages. Somehow there never seemed any assets wherewith to pay the interest on these borrowed sums. Moseley paid some of them himself, and gradually, as he grew rich, bought up these mortgages, though he still kept them in the names of the original mortgagees. As time wore on, things resulted in being much as he had told Sir Horace they now were, that is, that he was nearly the sole mortgagee of the St. Helens property—that particular manor even not quite excepted.

Now his wrath had had time to cool, he had no wish to be hard on Sir Horace. He told this to the solicitor to whom he handed over his trust. Truth to speak, he was loath to leave the cottage in which he had lived so many years, to abandon the business which had so long been his vocation. He had plenty of money, there was no necessity for his working any more; but Birkett Moseley was of that kind who die in harness. Labour seems to be a condition of their existence; once

they have nothing to do, then interest in life ceases—they mope, pine, and fade away. Taking their pleasure is to them an unsolvable conundrum. But with all that, Moseley knew the implacable De Driby temper too well to dream that the breach between him and Sir Horace could be ever healed. He did not attempt it; he did nothing further than send that message through his successor, that he had no wish to make things unpleasant for Sir Horace, had no intention of foreclosing on his mortgages.

The Baronet's wrath was of a much more enduring character; but he was compelled to admit, on reflection, that he was powerless at present. Whatever he might say, he was quite aware that Fortie and Kate Moseley had married within the prescribed time, and that his uncle was perfectly sound in intellect when adding the codicil to his will, although he might have wandered in his talk just at the last. Resisting that claim now, he knew was

hopeless. Litigation would have protracted payment, and by bringing the pressure of Fortie's old liabilities to bear on him in the meantime, he would have stood a fair chance of once more driving his cousin out of the country. But all this was hopeless with Moseley there, not only to contribute the sinews of war, but holding such terrible weapons of retaliation in his hands as all these mortgages placed at his disposal. There was naught left him but to chew the cud of his wrath—bread of ashes though it might be, and bitter in the mouth.

Meanwhile, Fortie and his wife have established themselves at a comfortable hotel in Jermyn Street, and are passing through their honeymoon with a tranquil happiness that the haze which enveloped its birth little augured. Upon returning from a solitary expedition one morning, Fortie found a lady with his wife, whom he recognized as Lizzie Jerningham.

“Delighted to see you, Lizzie, once

more, and looking handsomer than ever," he exclaimed, taking both her hands.

"Well, upon my word, Fortie," said Mrs. Merrington, "it is getting about time that I interfered, not only in behalf of my own rights, but of those of other people. Who pray, sir, do you take this lady for, that you call Lizzie in such an offhand manner? Perhaps, though, it is only an Americanism, my dear."

"I know her for one of my best friends," said Fortie, laughing.

"Why, you don't mean to say you have never told him?" inquired Lizzie.

"Good gracious! no. I've never had time. We could not all keep single for you, Fortie, you know, though I did myself. Let me re-introduce you to Mrs. Furnival."

"You don't mean, Lizzie, that you're married to Fripley?"

"Yes she is," interrupted Katie, "and he's coming here to lunch, and I don't know what we are going to do afterwards,

but we are going to pass a pleasant afternoon somewhere."

"And how long is it since your marriage?" inquired Fortie.

"Barely a month. We were engaged for a long time; but you see we are poor people, and Fripley said he couldn't take me till he was realizing income enough to feed me on. However he's doing well now, and so a little while back he came for me. I've bid farewell to the stage, that is for the present, but we always go back you know. I shall coax Fripley after a bit into letting me do a little once more to help the exchequer."

The entrance of Furnival here diverted the conversation, and warm were the congratulations exchanged between him and Fortie.

"And so, Fripley, like myself you are married," said the latter.

"Yes, I foresee that in consequence of the present gigantic agitation in favour of woman's rights, the weaker sex will shortly

be in the ascendant. I always go with the stream, and lost no time in linking my fortunes with some one whose sex will enable her to take care of me in the stormy days that are impending."

"Do you think you will be able to protect him, Lizzie?"

"I don't know, he takes very good care of me at present. I shall show I am grateful by doing my best when the time comes," replied the actress, laughing.

"Come away to lunch, good people, for I am dying of hunger," interrupted Katie, and a merrier quartette never sat down to that sociable meal.

In due course of time, Birkett Moseley arrived in London, and settled himself, after a little, in a quiet house in the vicinity of the Regent's Park, not very far from Lizzie's old home. But want of occupation made time hang heavy on his hands, and before long he had found his way down to the City and commenced business as a corn factor. The Merring-

tons, after a short stay in London, crossed the Atlantic and met with a warm welcome from Seth and his wife in New York.

“So you have brought her back with you, Fortie,” laughed Zare, as she met them on the deck of the steamer. “Come here, Katie, and let me see if you are as ill as you pretended to be. Why, you little impostor, your cheeks are covered with roses. I don’t believe you had anything the matter with you, after all. You’ve been simulating a broken heart, little traitress. I wash my hands of the business. I shall show you her letter, Fortie, in my own justification. I had never interfered, had she not declared her life in danger.”

“Oh! Zare, Zare, don’t please!”

“Don’t please what, you little incarnation of deceit?”

“Don’t tease me so.”

“There, that’s just her old tricks, Fortie. Whenever in our old school days at Paris, I began to tell her a few wholesome

truths, she always commenced these coaxing ways. Well, come along, I've had you neither to pet nor bully for a long time, so I'm going to make a great deal of you."

Fortie wound up his business with his old employers, and declined more than one offer of a good opening in sundry mercantile capacities. It had been settled between him and Birkett Moseley, previous to leaving England, that "the five thousand" should be devoted to the payment of his debts, and that he, Moseley, should advance capital enough to start him in business on his return home.

The time flew merrily by during that New York visit. Zare could not make enough of her old school-fellow, and plunged into more, even, than her ordinary gaiety on that pretext. But the time came when Fortie pronounced that it was right he should once more begin to work for his bread, and Katie began to have twinges of conscience about the lonely life

her father was now leading, albeit his letters spoke much of the kindness of the Furnivals towards him. So resisting all Seth's arguments about it being their bounden duty to give old Sol Mattocks "fits" once more at the Jersey Spring Meeting, and Zare's pressing invitation to prolong their visit, Fortie and his wife once more winged their way to England. The sea voyage, change of scene, and the happy termination of her love affair had done wonders for Katie, and when she landed at Liverpool, she was a very different person from the spiritless girl who had sat herself down so listlessly on the fallen tree by the river that bright November morning.

Sir Horace, at St. Helens, still grimly struggles to clear his entangled property, but Moseley holds a heavy lien on the estate to this day. The impoverished condition of the property has so completely swamped the Baronet's ulterior schemes of ambition, that he often pon-

ders moodily on the exceeding bitterness of the rind that Sir Giles bequeathed him. Want of money has completely precluded his being the political power he had looked to become in the county.

Mrs. De Driby, with many shrugs of her shoulders, still confides to her friends how her unfortunate nephew was entrapped into marrying that designing minx (a mere farmer's daughter, my dear); and how he now does something horrid for his living in that dreadful City.

Moseley and Merrington are a thriving firm, and their name is well known on the American side of the Ocean.

The play is played, the lights are out, and the curtain down. It is for you, reader, to say if it hath amused, as the old satirist saith,

“Scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim.”

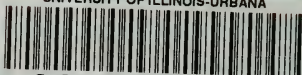
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